

Birthday Celebrations, then and now ~ EFL lesson (*mid-upper level*)  
~Michael Krigline; <http://eflsuccess.com/birthday-efl/>

*Preview the vocabulary and then discuss this: What are your favorite birthday traditions? What is your favorite thing to do on a birthday?*

When I was teaching in Beijing, I wanted to make a new friend and practice speaking Chinese. So, I walked into a “jiaozi” (Chinese fast food) eatery and sat next to a friendly stranger my own age whom I’ll call “Dan.” As we got to know each other, I said my birthday was coming up and asked when his birthday was. “Which one?” Dan asked. At first I thought I misunderstood, but he was serious! “I have two birthdays,” Dan said. “While I was born on Feb 15, I almost drowned on Sept 2 but someone saved my life, so I celebrate that as my Second Birthday.” To Dan’s surprise, I said I have two birthdays too! (*I’ll explain in a moment.*)



All over the world, people remember the day they were born with gifts, music, special food, flowers, and gatherings with friends and relatives.

The tradition of a birthday cake with candles dates back to 18th-century Germany. According to *Readers Digest*, “On the morning of a child’s birthday, he or she would receive a cake with lighted candles that added up to the kid’s age, plus one. This extra candle was called the ‘light of life,’ representing the hope of another full year lived.” The article said that the child made a secret wish and tried to blow out all the candles with one breath—a tradition that is still common nowadays. Today, the cake is normally presented with “the Birthday song”—the most frequently-sung English song in the world!

During COVID-19, many traditions have had to change. Unable to be with friends in person, some people have a virtual birthday party. Each participant plans ahead, sending a gift by mail to the “birthday boy/girl,” and preparing a cake or treat to enjoy during the party. Then, connected by smartphone, they can share stories, sing, and laugh as their friend opens their gifts. One advantage of a Pandemic Birthday Party is that you can even celebrate with friends on the other side of the globe!

Why do I have two birthdays? As I explained to Dan, during my first year in college, someone also saved my life. That year, I embraced “the light of life” and was baptized as a Christian on Dec 24 (Christmas Eve), so I celebrate that as my Second Birthday. Jesus said: “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” (John 8:12 ESV) I was “drowning” in a self-centered life with no real meaning; Jesus’ “light of life” gave me love,



forgiveness, lasting friendships, and a new purpose: to invite others to know Him so they can have a “Second Birthday” too!

### Discussion:

1. What are your favorite birthday traditions?
2. Tell us about the best birthday party you can remember.
3. Do you have one birthday or two? If “two,” please explain.
4. Christians say that they are “born again” or “born from above.” What do you think they mean by this?
5. What are the advantages and disadvantages of having a Pandemic Birthday Party as described?
6. Read John 8:12 again. What do you think he means by “darkness” and “light”? What are some examples of “walking in darkness”?
7. If you have time, watch the “Pandemic anthem” on YouTube (<https://youtu.be/BSRbbXdkCXw>), which includes pictures of a birthday party. What is your favorite part of the music video?

### Vocabulary:

drown: to die by being under water too long

fast food: the kinds of food (e.g., hamburgers, instant noodles) that can be given to customers quickly, so they can eat in a short time or take them away

hope: a confident, positive expectation (not just wishful thinking)

in person: face-to-face, not virtually, in a photo, by letter, etc. **A few years ago, I saw the Olympic Games in person.**

jiaozi: Chinese dumplings; a boiled pastry shell with meat inside, and sometimes leftovers are fried.

pandemic: (technical) a disease that affects people over a very large area country or even the whole world.

smartphone: a mobile phone that is also a small computer, that can connect to the internet, take photos, run apps, etc.

tradition: [countable] a belief, custom, or way of doing something that has existed for a long time; [uncountable] all of these beliefs, customs, etc., in general. (传统)

virtual: (adj) seen or created on a computer or online instead of in the real world

Sources and resources:

<https://www.rd.com/article/origin-of-birthday-cake/>

<https://www.rd.com/article/happy-birthday-song-facts/>

<https://youtu.be/BSRbbXdkCXw>

<https://www.elcivics.com/esl/birthday-party/lesson-3.html>

<https://www.mexconnect.com/articles/459-history-of-the-pinata/>

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All over the world, people remember the day they were born with gifts, music, special food, flowers and gatherings with friends and relatives.

The tradition of a birthday cake with candles dates back to 18th-century Germany. According to *Readers Digest*, “On the morning of a child’s birthday, he or she would receive a cake with lighted candles that added up to the kid’s age, plus one. This extra candle was called the ‘light of life,’ representing the hope of another full year lived.” The article said that the child made a secret wish and tried to blow out all the candles with one breath—a tradition that is still common today.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, friends unable to meet in person, sometimes have a virtual birthday party. People both near and far away connect by smartphones. They share stories, sing, and laugh together to honor their friend’s birth.

One day, a friend told me he had *two* birthdays! He explained that he almost drowned, but someone saved his life; he celebrates that as his Second Birthday. I told him that something similar happened to me. During my first year in college, someone also saved my life. That year, I embraced “the light of life” (John 8:12) and was baptized as a Christian on Dec 24, so I celebrate that as my Second Birthday. I was “drowning” in a self-centered life with no real meaning; Jesus gave me love, forgiveness, lasting friendships, and a new purpose: to invite others to know Him so they can have a “Second Birthday” too!



### Discussion

1. Tell us about the best birthday party you can remember.
2. Pretend that you will have a virtual birthday party, and describe what will happen.
3. Why did the author’s friend say he has two birthdays? Why did the author say he has two birthdays as well?
4. Do you have one birthday or two? If “two,” please explain.
5. What are the advantages and disadvantages of having a Pandemic Birthday Party as described?
6. If you have time, watch the “Pandemic anthem” on YouTube (<https://youtu.be/BSRbbXdkCXw>), which includes pictures of a birthday party. What is your favorite part of the music video?

### Vocabulary:

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### **Games in person.**

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CHRISTAFARI - Pandemic (Quarantine Anthem) [Official Music Video]  
<https://youtu.be/BSRbbXdkCXw>; April 2020

SONG LYRICS:

(Cough) So I just get off a plane and my throat is hurting  
So I go to the doctor  
The doctor walks in with a face mask and goggles  
And doesn't even look at me and says  
We're out of tests so you're going to have to be quarantined (What?)  
So I go to the grocery store to get some supplies...  
But there's nothing left

It's such an empty scene, yes  
Cause everybody is in a quarantine  
The Governor telling us to shelter in place  
So me cranking up this riddim  
With the drum and the bass  
Supposed to be on a 10 country tour  
But me locked up in the studio  
Now safe and secure  
Writing these lyrics got to spit them out fast  
So you better put on your N-95 mask

PRE-CHORUS 1:

Mass panic  
Pandemic  
Pestilence is everywhere I say don't panic  
Cause God's got it  
Children have no fear

CHORUS 1:

We no fear, we no fear, we no fear  
About no Covid-19  
No we no fear, we no fear, we no fear  
Cause Christ is the King - eh oh  
No we no fear, we no fear, we no fear  
About no dreaded virus - ooh yo  
No we no fear, we no fear, we no fear  
Cause Christ is with us - eh oh

All of them a fear about this covid 19  
And so many stores selling out of everything  
Cant' even find hand sanitizer  
Recession hit - we pockets getting tighter - woe?  
And will they send in the National Guard?  
Tell me I cannot leave my own yard

See people fightin' over toilet paper - Yo!  
How many years you gonna use that for?

Mass panic  
Pandemic  
People fretting about their healthcare  
Don't panic  
Cause God's got it

CHORUS 1:  
Children have no fear  
We no fear, we no fear, we no fear  
About no Covid-19  
No we no fear, we no fear, we no fear  
Cause Christ is the King - eh oh  
No we no fear, we no fear, we no fear  
What's in the newspaper - ooh yoi  
No we no fear, we no fear, we no fear  
We know that God is greater

Darkness blocks the sun  
Death is stalking everyone  
Across the mighty seas  
Crippling nations

God You are my light  
Healer of creation  
You will give me strength  
While I am waitin', waitin'

Everyday they're counting up more deaths  
So much stress it's leaving me short of breath (gasp!)  
Now they say I cannot go to church - cha!  
But they cannot keep me from God's Word - ya  
While they're searching for the antivirus  
Never forget that Christ is with us  
We may not know what the future holds  
But we know WHO holds the future yeah!

(PRE-CHORUS)  
(CHORUS 1)

So people don't fear no way  
People don't fear no way  
No people don't fear no way  
For hope is coming

Ya, ya, ya, ya  
All them a talk 'bout the negative tings  
Can't get them out of my mind  
So no more television set  
Gonna spend some family time  
Can't go to work, can't go to church  
I'm trapped inna this place  
Not feeling great then isolate  
And cover up your face yo

Cover up your face  
Cover up your face  
Not feeling great then isolate  
And cover up your face  
Me say cover up your face  
Cover up your face  
Not feeling great then isolate  
And cover up your face

(CHORUS 2)

All them fret 'bout this Covid 19  
And telling us we've got to quarantine  
Now they may have found a cure  
When will we really know for sure?  
This is not the end  
Don't give up hope