



A Festival Older Than Borders

Read the passage and answer the questions. (CEFR B1–B2)

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- Nowruz is one of the few festivals shared by people who speak different languages, follow different religions, and live under very different governments. Iranians, Afghans, Azerbaijanis, Kazakhs, Uzbeks, and Kurds all welcome spring on roughly the same day. In 2024, thirteen countries jointly listed it with UNESCO as part of the intangible heritage of humanity. Even in Stockholm and California, Iranian families far from home still set the same table at the same moment.
- Yet the festival's age has also made it political. Because its roots lie in Zoroastrianism, some religious leaders in Iran have criticized it, and the Taliban removed it from Afghanistan's list of public holidays in 2022. For Kurds, the bonfires of Newroz have long been a symbol of freedom, and in Türkiye the celebrations were tightly restricted for years.
- Even some well-loved customs are being questioned. Hajji Firuz, a cheerful street performer with a soot-covered face, is now criticized by Black Iranians and scholars who link the character to the history of slavery. Perhaps this is the real strength of an ancient festival: it survives not by staying the same, but by letting each generation decide what renewal means.

Comprehension

1. What is the main idea of the passage?

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| (A) Nowruz is mainly celebrated by Iranian families who live abroad. | (B) UNESCO decided that Nowruz must be celebrated in the same way in every country. |
| (C) Nowruz unites many peoples, but its long history has also made it a subject of political and social debate. | (D) Nowruz has stopped changing because it is more than 3,000 years old. |

2. According to paragraph 1, what happened in 2024?

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| (A) Families in Stockholm held the first Nowruz festival in Europe. | (B) The Taliban made Nowruz a public holiday again. |
| (C) Iran asked other countries to stop celebrating Nowruz. | (D) Thirteen countries jointly listed Nowruz with UNESCO. |

3. Why have some religious leaders in Iran criticized Nowruz?

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| (A) Because its roots lie in Zoroastrianism. | (B) Because it is too expensive for many families. |
| (C) Because it was removed from the UNESCO list. | (D) Because Kurds use bonfires to celebrate it. |

4. What can we infer about the Newroz bonfires in Türkiye?

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| (A) They were banned because they caused many fires in cities. | (B) The authorities saw them as more than a seasonal celebration. |
| (C) They were only for tourists from Iran. | (D) They are no longer lit by Kurdish people. |

5. In paragraph 3, the word 'renewal' is closest in meaning to

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| (A) a strict rule that never changes | (B) a public holiday given by the government |
| (C) a show performed in the street | (D) the act of making something new and fresh again |

6. Why does the writer mention Iranian families in Stockholm and California?

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| (A) To show that people keep the festival even when they live far from Iran. | (B) To explain why UNESCO chose thirteen countries. |
| (C) To argue that Nowruz is more popular in Europe than in Iran. | (D) To criticize families who do not return home for the holiday. |



Vocabulary, Paraphrase & Summary

Match the words with the definitions. Then rewrite and summarize.

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| 1. jointly | a. the act of making something new, fresh, or strong again |
| 2. intangible | b. done together by two or more people, groups, or countries |
| 3. heritage | c. not a physical thing that you can touch, such as a custom or a skill |
| 4. roots | d. the customs, buildings, and ideas that are passed down from the past |
| 5. criticize | e. the place or idea where something first started |
| 6. restrict | f. to say what you think is bad or wrong about someone or something |
| 7. generation | g. to control something and keep it within limits |
| 8. renewal | h. all the people who were born and live at about the same time |

Paraphrase — say it in your own words

1. “Iranians, Afghans, Azerbaijanis, Kazakhs, Uzbeks, and Kurds all welcome spring on roughly the same day.”

Hint: Use 'people from many countries' instead of the list, and 'almost' instead of 'roughly'.

2. “Yet the festival's age has also made it political.”

Hint: Start with 'Because the festival is so old, ...' and use 'connected to politics'.

3. “Perhaps this is the real strength of an ancient festival: it survives not by staying the same, but by letting each generation decide what renewal means.”

Hint: Explain why the festival continues. Use 'continue', 'change', and 'young people'.

Summary

Summarize the passage in about 50 words.



Debate & Opinion Essay

Prepare for a debate. Then write your opinion (100–150 words).

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Motion: Traditional festival characters that some people find hurtful, such as Hajji Firuz, should be removed.

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- A public festival should make everyone feel welcome, and Black Iranians say the character is hurtful.
- Scholars link the character to the history of slavery, so keeping it can repeat old harm.
- Traditions have always changed, and the passage says a festival survives by letting each generation decide what renewal means.

Add your own reason:

AGAINST 反対

- Many performers and audiences enjoy the character without any wish to hurt others.
- The custom can be kept in a new form, for example without the soot-covered face, instead of being removed.
- Removing parts of a festival can erase cultural memory, and the decision should come from the community, not from outsiders.

Add your own reason:

Opinion	<i>I believe / I think that ...</i>
Reason 1	<i>First, ... For example, ...</i>
Reason 2	<i>Second, ... In fact, ...</i>
Counter	<i>Some people say ... However, ...</i>
Conclusion	<i>In conclusion, ...</i>