

I. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Monday, January 16th is a holiday. It is MLK day. MLK stands for Martin Luther King. Martin Luther King was a black minister who fought against racism and discrimination. At that time in America blacks and whites could not use the same facilities. There were separate churches, schools, swimming pools, neighborhoods and even public restrooms. Those for blacks were seldom equal to those for whites. America was a segregated nation.

Martin Luther King was an inspiration to the civil rights movement. He led sit-ins to desegregate lunch counters and restaurants. He led boycotts of businesses that would not serve black people. He led marches demanding equal treatment for black people. He delivered a speech called "I Have a Dream." A famous line from the speech is, "I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character." Martin Luther King was assassinated in 1968 because of his views on equality for blacks.

Martin Luther King probably could not imagine that less than 50 years after his speech, America would elect a black man as president. Still there are many people in America who are prejudiced against people of another race or religion. This is a problem that America continues to fight.

1. Are most of the people in your country of the same race and ethnic group?
2. Is there an ethnic group in your country who are not treated well?
3. Are most of the people in your country the same religion?
4. Have you or someone you know ever experienced discrimination?
5. Do you think racism and discrimination are getting better or worse world wide?
6. What would you do if someone used a racist term in your presence? or told a racist joke?
7. Do you think interracial marriages have more problems than those from the same ethnic group?
8. Would your parents or grandparents approve of an interracial marriage?

II. Party Idioms

Monday my group asked about some idioms they had heard, but did not understand. Many of these idioms were about parties. So today, I thought we would talk about some of these "party" idioms. Read the conversation a couple of times, then see if you can tell what the underlined words mean from the context.

Rob: I'm throwing a party next weekend. I want everyone here to come.

Jim: I won't be in town next weekend, but John will come. He's a party animal. If there is a party within 20 miles of here, he will be there. Sharon will come too. She's always the life of the party. She tells hilarious stories and jokes. You didn't ask Ted to come, did you?

Rob: Yeah, I did. Why do you ask that?

Jim: Because Ted is a big party pooper. At our last party we set up speakers outside and played some great tunes. Everyone was dancing and having a great time. Then Ted comes out and insists we shut down the music because it might disturb the neighbors. What a party pooper! I tried to explain that all my neighbors were at the party. But he threw such a fit that everyone stopped dancing. Soon afterwards everyone left.

Rob: Oh, I didn't know Ted was such a wet blanket. My brother in law is like that. He was at my bachelor party. We were having a great time. We were really painting the town red. Then my brother in law told us we should go home and get to bed early because the wedding was the next day. I couldn't believe he ruined a perfectly good party. The wedding wasn't until the next night. We would have had all day to recover. I guess my wife didn't want us to be hung over on the wedding day, so she told her brother to shut the party down early.

Jim: Is Jan coming?

Rob: She probably will.

Jim: Jan's such a social butterfly. I imagine she has lots of invitations to parties.

Rob: Actually, she said she had been invited to another party, but would try to go to both of them. She has lots and lots of friends and wants to spend time with everyone.

Jim: Did you ask Jill?

Rob: I asked Jill because I felt I had to. But Jill is such a wallflower. I don't know how she will be at a party. She's kind of a loner. She'll probably just sit by herself in the living room.

Party Discussion:

1. What are the usual occasions for a party in your country?
2. What do you like to do at parties?
3. Do you let people smoke at your party?
4. Do you let people drink at your party?
5. What is an annoying party behavior?
6. Would you rather attend someone else's party or throw a party of your own?
7. Do you ever play games at parties? What kind?
8. Are birthday parties celebrated with a cake and lots of candles in your country?
9. What does RSVP mean?
10. Did you have dance parties when you were in middle school and high school? Did you go? What did you think of them?
11. Are you more of a social butterfly or a wallflower?