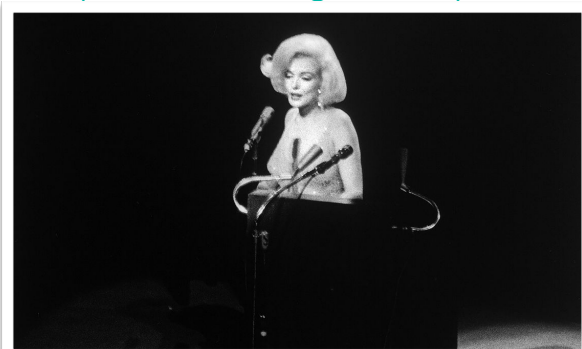


# WEEKLY ENGLISH PRACTICE

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

Birthday boy Coach John looks at the history of celebrating birthdays.



The tradition of celebrating everyone's birthday is fairly recent. It coincided with several socioeconomic **trends** in the 19th and 20th centuries that saw the rise of consumerism and increased investment in the upbringing of children—and, **thus**, the annual celebration of their lives through the giving of gifts.

Annual celebrations and commemorations came about with the invention of the calendar.

Some rituals date from the ancient Mesopotamians and Egyptians, who first recognised patterns in time and developed calendars. In those societies, only members of the **nobility** were honoured with birthday parties; nevertheless, the nobility often invited townspeople to participate, reinforcing the social order in the process.

After the decline of the Puritan influence, which restricted celebrations in the USA, wealthy Protestants began hosting children's parties in the nineteenth century.

By the 1920s, children had come to associate birthday parties with cakes, gifts and party

decorations.

Americans imported the idea of a birthday cake directly from the German Kinderfeste. In 1859, a Kentucky schoolteacher named Mildred Hill composed a musical melody to sing to her students and titled it "Good Morning to You/ All." Her sister, Patty Hill, penned the lyrics and in 1893 added a verse that began "Happy Birthday to You." The song was published in 1935 and has been translated into **countless** languages worldwide.

The use of the piñata, a tradition imported from Mexico, is now a standard feature at many children's birthday parties in North America.

In England, the practice of sending birthday cards started about 100 years ago; now worldwide millions of cards are sent each year to wish loved ones a happy birthday. Birthday gifts were first offered by the ancient Romans, who believed that the celebrant was vulnerable to **evil** spirits.

Up until the 1950s, celebrating individual birthdays was rare in Japan. Instead, everyone's birthday would be celebrated on New Year's Day, as – reflecting the collectivist nature of traditional Japanese society – that was the day everyone was considered to be one year older.

I'm off to celebrate the day I was born..... so

Happy Birthday to me and you - however and whenever you **mark** it!



by **ECP coach**

**John Hird**

## Word list

**trends: (n)** the way or direction things tend to go.

**thus: (adv)** in the way just indicated to persuade people to do something.

**nobility: (n)** the noble, or highest social, class, or the body of nobles in a country.

**countless: (adj)** so vast a number as to be beyond counting; innumerable.

**evil: (adj)** morally wrong or bad; immoral; wicked.

**to mark: (v)** to give attention to, celebrate.

**leap years: (n)** in the Western calendar) a year that contains 366 days, with February 29 as an additional day; it occurs every four years.

**wallpaper: (n)** paper, usually with decorative patterns, for covering walls or ceilings.

**duel: (n)** a fight between two persons with deadly weapons according to an accepted procedure. A contest between two persons or teams.

## Let's chat about that!

1. When were birthdays first celebrated and by who?
2. According to the text, how are birthdays celebrated in different countries and cultures?
3. When do you think John's birthday is? When is yours?
4. How do you usually celebrate your birthday?
5. Looking at p2: What significant events happened on November 30th in history?
6. What historic events happened on your birthday?
7. What is the origin of the word 'Yahoo'?

### WHAT HAPPENED ON NOVEMBER 30th?

**November 30** is the 334th day of the year (335th in **leap years**) in the Gregorian calendar; 31 days remain until the end of the year.

**1872:** The first-ever international football match takes place at Hamilton Crescent, Glasgow, between Scotland and England. November 30th is also St Andrew's Day, the patron saint of Scotland.

**1835:** Mark Twain, American novelist, humorist, and critic was born on November 30th, as was Punk rocker Billy Idol, in **1955** and film director Woody Allen in **1935**.

**Jonathan Swift**, the Irish satirist and essayist was born on **November 30th, 1697**. He wrote, Gulliver's Travels in which he invented the name, 'Yahoo'.

The civil war in Palestine broke out on **November 30th, 1947** when the UN passed a resolution which agreed to the partition of Palestine and the **setting up** of a Jewish state.

Irish writer, Oscar Wilde died in a Paris hotel on **November 30th, 1900**. His last words were; "My **wallpaper** and I are fighting a **duel** to the death. One of us has got to go".

### HAPPY BIRTHDAY VARIOUS VERSIONS

Happy Birthday Mr Burns - The Ramones

Happy Birthday Mr President - Marilyn Monroe (to President Kennedy)

Happy Birthday - The Beatles

Muppet Show. Animal and Swedish Chef - Happy Birthday

Happy Birthday in Klingon - Star Trek, New Generation

Happy Birthday - Classic Pop-Punk version from Altered Images

Dolly Parton Happy Birthday

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