

## 5B Coming of age

### VOCABULARY BUILDING Suffix -al

The suffix *-al* usually means *related to*. For example, *national* means *related to a nation*.

1 Read the sentences from the article (1–4). Match the words in bold with the correct meaning (a–d).

- 1 A girl's fifteenth birthday is a huge **social** occasion for many Latin American families.
- 2 The tradition has become **international**, spreading through Central and South America.
- 3 It marks a time of important **personal** change.
- 4 The event has both personal and **historical** importance.

Connected with ...

- |                  |                    |
|------------------|--------------------|
| a many countries | c a person         |
| b the past       | d groups of people |

2 Complete the sentences with these adjectives.

cultural      emotional      traditional      typical

- 1 The *fiesta de quince años* is hundreds of years old. It's a \_\_\_\_\_ Mexican celebration.
- 2 Certain things are expected at most parties. At a \_\_\_\_\_ party, the girl's father removes her shoes.
- 3 The party brings out strong feelings. The shoe-changing can be a very \_\_\_\_\_ moment.
- 4 It's part of the Mexican way of life, but many countries don't have a \_\_\_\_\_ tradition like this.

3 What adjectives can you make from these nouns? Be careful. You need to remove a letter from some nouns.

centre      music      nature      politics      profession

### READING

#### 4 MY PERSPECTIVE

Work in pairs. Discuss the questions.

- What are the most important celebrations in your family?
- What do you think is the most important birthday in a person's life? Why?
- Are there any unique social celebrations in your city or country?

5 Read the article and choose the topic and main idea.

- 1 Topic
  - a Latin American celebrations
  - b The *fiesta de quince años*
  - c Becoming an adult
- 2 Main idea
  - a The culture of ancient Mexico has affected all of Latin America.
  - b The *fiesta de quince años* shouldn't be more important than a wedding.
  - c A girl's fifteenth birthday is one of the most important celebrations for Latin American families.

6 Read the article again. Are the sentences true (T), false (F) or is the information not given (NG)?

- 1 According to the article, the biggest *fiestas de quince años* are held in Spain.
- 2 In the US, the *fiestas* usually aren't as big as weddings.
- 3 The history of the *fiesta* goes back more than 500 years.
- 4 There are over 500,000 *fiestas* in the US a year.
- 5 Some *fiestas* in the US last for a week.
- 6 New shoes show that the girl has become a young woman.

7 Find information in the article to support each sentence.

- 1 The *fiesta de quince años* is an international celebration.
- 2 The girl is seen as a different person after the celebration.
- 3 The celebrations have become bigger over time.
- 4 People spend a lot of money on a *fiesta de quince años*.
- 5 The celebration is a very old tradition.

8 Read the comments on the article. Write one of your own, making some connection with your own life or culture.

#### Comments

**BeijingGuy** Interesting post! I'm Chinese, and I've just celebrated my *Guan Li* – a twentieth birthday celebration for boys. We also celebrate a girl's fifteenth birthday. We call it *Ji Li*. Both of these are like the *fiesta de quince años* – we celebrate becoming men and women.

**Agnieska** In Poland, we don't have a cultural tradition like this, but for us, eighteen is a big birthday. We usually have a party with friends. You can vote and drive a car when you're eighteen. I haven't had my eighteenth birthday yet – one more year!

**Haruto** We have a celebration in Japan called *Seijin-no-Hi*. It's on the second Monday in January, and twenty year olds wear traditional clothes, receive gifts and have parties. My sister has already celebrated this, but I'm not old enough yet.

9 Design your perfect party. Where is it held? Who do you invite? What do you do?



A father and daughter celebrate at a *fiesta de quince años*.

## From child to adult – in one day

32 Delilah Bermejo, a New Yorker with family history in Puerto Rico and Colombia, says that 'it's the most important day' of a girl's life. The *fiesta de quince años* – a girl's fifteenth birthday celebration – is a huge social occasion for Latin American families, and is one of life's biggest celebrations. Friends and relatives come together to celebrate a girl's passing from childhood into the adult world. It marks a time of important personal change. According to Ed Hassel, manager of a company that provides food for parties in New York, the celebrations are now 'bigger than the weddings I do. We're talking 125, 150, 175 people. And they're taking Saturday night, my most expensive night.'

The event has both personal and historical importance. Families have held special celebrations for fifteen year olds for at least 500 years – since the time of the Aztecs in Mexico. At age fifteen, Aztec boys became warriors – men old enough to fight in a war – and girls became women with adult rights and duties.

In the past, parties were usually small, with a few friends and family members. It was a chance for the young woman to meet young men. Only very rich families had big *fiestas*. Since the arrival of Europeans

in the Americas, the tradition has become international, spreading through Central and South America and into North America. Nowadays, big celebrations are popular with the nearly 60 million Latinos in the US and Canada.

Friends and family take an active part in a traditional Mexican *fiesta de quince años*. A 'man of honour', usually a member of the girl's family, accompanies the *quinceañera* throughout the celebration. She also chooses a 'court', often fourteen girls and fourteen boys, one for each year of her life. They stay near the *quinceañera*, join all of the dances, and look after her on her special day. The celebration often begins with a formal ceremony before it becomes a more usual birthday party with food and dancing. Families with more money usually have bigger parties. A typical ceremony ends with the girl's father removing the flat shoes that she wore to the party and replacing them with a pair of more grown-up shoes with a high heel. This can be an emotional moment. It means that the person who walked into the party as a girl leaves the party as a young woman.