Lesson Objectives:
- Practice note taking
- Identify main idea and key details in an oral presentation
- Work cooperatively with others to gain understanding
- Provide a summary of an oral presentation

Language Skill Proficiency:
- Speaking
- Listening
- Reading
- Writing

Materials and Equipment:
- Computer and internet connection OR hardcopy of Sweet Friday essay
- Cornell Notes Template

Activity Plan

Warm Up: Write the following questions on the board and have Ss get in pairs and discuss. What does the word “tradition” mean to you? Where do traditions come from? What are the impacts of traditions (What do they do?)? After several minutes, have Ss provide feedback about their conversations to the class.

Introduction: Explain to Ss that today’s class will consider these questions. Explain to Ss that class will begin by listening to an essay called Sweet Friday. Ask Ss what they predict the main idea of the essay will be based on the title.

Presentation: Go over the following vocabulary with the class (and other vocabulary from the essay as necessary): relying, convened, connect (as in human relationships), overdoing it, instituted, indulgence, obligations, anticipation, maintaining, ritual.

Practice: Provide Ss with Cornell Notes template. Review template sections with the Ss. Explain to Ss that as they listen to essay they will initially focus on recording what they hear in the “details” section of the template. Ask Ss to leave the Key Points and Summary sections for later in the lesson. Either play or read the Sweet Friday essay* to the class. Essay can be found at http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=7385006. NOTE: Allow Ss at least 2-3 listening opportunities.

Practice: Have Ss share in small groups (3-4 Ss) the information they recorded in their notes while listening to the essay. Have Ss work together to add to their understanding of the essay and notes. Ultimately, have Ss complete the Key Points section of their notes together. NOTE: Summary should still be blank.

Practice: Have Ss work individually using their updated notes to complete a summary of the essay. If it has been taught, remind Ss to include a topic sentence, transition words (first, second, etc.) and a conclusion. As Ss finish, have them get into pairs and orally share their summaries with one another. Eventually have some Ss read their summaries with the class.

Evaluation: Have class work together to create a final summary of the essay on the whiteboard.

Extension Activities:
- Have Ss create their own paragraphs about a tradition they celebrate.
- Have Ss compare/contrast traditions celebrated by members of the class using Venn Diagrams.
- Have Ss work in groups to create a mock multi-cultural celebration of traditions and present event plan to the class.

*Sweet Friday is part of the “This I Believe” online radio essays. Essays can be found at http://thisibelieve.org/. Recorded essays were aired on NPR and read by the authors.
Sweet Friday

Lena Ann Winkler - Worthington, Ohio
As heard on NPR's All Things Considered, February 19, 2007

Lena Winkler is juggling five kids, medical school and a pending divorce. She believes keeping a tradition she learned in Eastern Europe can help her and her family through these challenging times.

I believe in the power of tradition.

I am a mother of five children, ages 4 to 10, and I’m in my third year of medical school. I am also going through a divorce. The details of the divorce — who is right, who is wrong — are not important because like all divorces, everyone gets hurt. I will be relying on traditions to pull us through this intact.

Last year, I earned medical school credit working with a nonprofit health-care organization for women and children in the Republic of Georgia. Georgia, formerly a Soviet country, reminds me of my family: collapsed and worried, but bright with personality, strength and hope. When I finished my work there, I brought home the traditional dolls, daggers and wine, but I also brought home Tbili P’araskevi: Sweet Friday.

It was a tradition of our Georgian office where every Friday at 3 p.m., work would stop for a blissful half hour while we convened in the basement kitchen to feast on cake: gorgeous, fluffy delights of cream and sugar. The cook, drivers, doctors, office staff and bosses would gather to connect and relax. Then, slightly light-headed and sometimes even a little nauseated from overdoing it, we would return to our offices to wrap up business before the weekend.

My five children and I have instituted this indulgence among our neighborhood friends ever since. Sometimes we bake the night before: huge lopsided layer cakes, odd-sized cookies or sloppy attempts at parfaits. Sometimes, if medical school obligations overwhelm me, I whirl through the grocery store as I race home, grabbing cookies, bright paper plates and napkins.

It is not just the extravagant sweetness of the afternoon or the regularity of the occasion that qualifies this as a tradition. It is the attention to detail and the anticipation — always a tablecloth (if maybe not ironed) and always a centerpiece (pine boughs, a pumpkin or some flowers from the garden). My children and I fantasize about the event all week long. And then, walking home from school on Fridays we round up everyone we pass. “We are having cake today. Come by. There is coffee and milk, too.” Mothers and children linger in the yard on nice warm days, abandoned backpacks and jackets strewn across the grass. In the winter, children squeeze two to a chair around our big kitchen table and the mothers cram into the living room.

Sweet Friday is now part of our uncertain and frightening divorce-dominated life. I feel a responsibility to keep up with small traditions like Sweet Friday and not slip into dread or self-pity.

I believe that by stubbornly maintaining this weekly tradition, my kids and I are creating a ritual to carry us into the future. Already we reminisce about past Sweet Fridays, and daydream about the one coming up.

Lena Winkler lives in Worthington, Ohio, and attends medical school at Wright State University. She studied women’s health issues in Georgia in 2005. Before medical school, Winkler taught Chinese and worked with adopted Chinese children in Columbus.

Independently produced for NPR by Jay Allison and Dan Gediman with John Gregory and Viki Merrick.
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Summary