

More than jam and Jerusalem



The Women's Institute is an organisation known for its jam-making and its unofficial anthem *Jerusalem*, but it is more than that – it campaigns, educates and supports. And on 15 September the UK Women's Institute is going to celebrate its 100th birthday.

With over 200,000 members, the Women's Institute (or WI as it is commonly known) is the largest women's voluntary organisation in the UK. Members meet monthly in one of the 6,600 branches throughout the country and are mainly involved in activities concerning the domestic sphere, particularly crafts, food and cooking. But arts, sports, leisure and science are also actively supported. Many of the branches hold competitions where members can impress each other with their talents for particular crafts – for example jam making, embroidery, painting and cake-baking.

As Tony Blair learnt to his cost, you don't mess with the WI. In September 2000 he made a speech at the national conference in Wembley, before an audience of 10,000 women. He was heckled, jeered and booed – because he didn't take the time to understand that while the WI is political (with a small 'p') it most certainly is not Political (with a big 'P'). It has taken an active role in many campaigns: parents being able to stay overnight with children in hospital, and anti-litter campaigns in the 1950s; better rural transport in the 1960s; better provision of nursery education and free family planning in the 1970s; better information about HIV and AIDS in the 1980s; concern about genetically modified food in the 1990s; and in this century, the WI has campaigned to protect rural post offices and family run farms. And it was on farms where the story began over 100 years ago.

The Women's Institute was founded in 1897 in Stoney Creek Ontario, Canada and was an organization run for the wives of the members of the local Farmers' Institute. The movement brought women together from isolated communities and offered training in areas of particular importance for them: childcare, home economics and small poultry keeping. WIs quickly spread throughout Ontario and by 1905 there were 130 branches.

The notion of the WI was brought to the UK during the First World War to encourage women to revitalize rural communities and more importantly, to encourage women to become more actively involved in food production.

However it wasn't long before the WI got political: it supported the building of state-aided housing; in the 1920s it encouraged the government to pass the Bastardy Bill, to provide help for children born outside of marriage; it urged the government to fund more health education to prevent the spread of venereal disease.

It was also in the early days of the WI that the song *Jerusalem* with words by William Blake became its unofficial anthem. *Jerusalem* had been strongly associated with the suffragist movement and the WI wanted a song which would represent the organization. As Grace Hadow, the WI Vice Chairman wrote in 1924: *Both words and music are simple and dignified and easy to learn.*

Have you seen the film *Calendar Girls*? It is based on the true story of Angela Baker and other members of Rylestone and District WI in Yorkshire. In order to raise money for leukaemia after the early death of Angela's husband, the group of women published a calendar of themselves involved in usual WI activities, knitting, baking, playing the piano for example, but all in the nude. The calendar was an immediate success and has since raised over three million pounds for charity.

Over the 100 years of the Women's Institute, thousands of women, mainly in rural areas, have been involved in one way or another in the WI. Throughout 2015 there have been many celebrations and centenary projects in branches throughout the UK. And despite updated advice from the Food Standards Agency on re-using jam jars, you can bet that WI members will still be making delicious jam and singing *Jerusalem* for many years to come.

If you would like to know more about the WI, then click [here](#).

If you would like to watch the official trailer for *Calendar Girls*, then click [here](#) (but ignore the voiceover that talks about a women's club - he means the Women's Institute!).

And would you like to listen to the wonderful *Jerusalem*? Then just click [here](#) to watch the Hurst Green WI singing!

And do you remember the *Did you know?* of the NTC May edition featuring the Glastonbury music festival? Well, [here](#) is the Women's Institute at Glastonbury!

If you would like to use the Women's Institute as a topic in your lesson, we have provided you with two activities at A2 level. You'll find them in the following **Teacher's notes** and on the **Worksheet**.

Teacher's notes

Activity 1: Crafty collocations (level A2, 10 mins)

- On the board write *Women's Institute* and explain that the organisation is celebrating its 100th birthday in England and Wales. Explain that the WI has over 200,000 women members and 6,600 branches in England and Wales. Ask students if they have seen the film *Calendar Girls* (*Kalender Girls* in German) and tell them that the main characters are members of the local WI.
- Explain that the WI is famous for crafts, cooking and food.
- On the board write *bake, cook, crochet, embroider, knit, make, sew*. Explain any unknown words.
- Read out the following list. After each word ask students to make a sentence using the correct collocation and call it out:
a quiche (*bake, make*); **a blanket** (*crochet, embroider, knit, make, sew*); **a cake** (*bake*); **jam** (*make*); **vegetables** (*cook*); **a mosaic** (*make*); **a hat** (*crochet, embroider, knit, make, sew*); **a jumper** (*knit*); **a tablecloth** (*embroider, sew*); **marmalade** (*make*); **meat** (*cook*); **a pair of socks** (*knit*).
- Ask students to think of their own ideas of words used in collocations and to call them out for other students to complete a short sentence.

Activity 2: Delicious jam (level A2, 10 mins)

You could use this activity with another recipe on [Making Scones](#) – yummy!

- Make a copy of **Delicious jam** (see Worksheet) - one for each pair of students - and cut it up into strips. Make sure you keep one copy uncut as the key.
- Ask if anyone makes jam or if anyone likes eating jam.
- Explain that students are going to read a recipe for raspberry jam.
- On the board write *dissolved, increase, mixture, simmer* and explain their meaning.
- Give each pair of students a set of the cut up **Delicious jam** recipe and explain they should put the recipe into the correct order.
- For students who finish quickly, ask them to write down other fruit names.
- When everyone has finished, check the right order of the recipe's steps together in class. Ask if anyone else has a jam recipe.
- If some students have written down fruit names, check them together.

Worksheet



Delicious jam

You need: 900g of raspberries, 900g

sugar, a teaspoonful of butter. First, wash the

raspberries. Put the fruit in a

saucepan. Boil the fruit and simmer for 2

minutes. When the fruit is soft, add the sugar and mix

together. Stir until the sugar has

all dissolved. Increase the heat under the fruit mixture and boil for

5 minutes. Remove from the heat and add

the butter. Leave for 15 minutes and then pour into jam jars.