

# THE MERRY CEMETERY



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# AIMS

- ❖ Getting the students to know some aspects about Romanian civilization, history and culture.
- ❖ Raising the students awareness of the risks and dangers of some serious problems in our current society, such as addictions (technology, drugs, gambling...), eating disorders (bulimia, anorexia...) or other bad habits (smoking or drinking).
- ❖ Helping the students to follow the main plot by using communicative and oral prompts.
- ❖ Familiarizing the students with some semantic fields such as health and fashion.
- ❖ Learning words by picture association.

## **Language and function skills**

- Oral skills: talking about past events, practicing the past simple.
- Talking about possible future risks and dangers with the 1<sup>st</sup> conditional.
- Giving advice and expressing obligation or prohibition with modal verbs.
- Developing some reading techniques and doing listening comprehension.
- Practicing intonation and phonetics (the final “ed” of the regular verbs) with some structures.
- Writing an informal letter and a narrative text.

# BACKGROUND INFORMATION



THE MERRY CEMETERY (Romanian: Cimitirul Vesel, pronounced [tʃimi'tirul 'vesel]) is a cemetery in the village of Săpânța, Maramureș county, Romania. It is famous for its colourful tombstones with naïve paintings describing, in an original and poetic manner, the people that are buried, as well as scenes from their lives. The Merry Cemetery became an open-air museum and a national tourist attraction.

The unusual feature of this cemetery is that it diverges from the prevalent belief, culturally shared among European societies – a belief that views death as something indelibly solemn. Connections with the local Dacian culture have been made, a culture whose philosophical tenets presumably vouched for the immortality of the soul and the belief that death was a moment filled with joy and anticipation for a better life.



## 1) BEFORE READING ACTIVITIES

### A) VOCABULARY:

Match the words to the pictures:



a) \_\_\_\_\_



b) \_\_\_\_\_



c) \_\_\_\_\_



d) \_\_\_\_\_

1. *Hammock*

2. *Gravestone*

3. *Buttonhole*

4. *Carnation*

### B) PRE-READING QUESTIONS

- a) What does the phrase *the Merry Cemetery* suggest you? What is the meaning of *Merry*?
- b) How can a cemetery be called “Merry”?
- c) Have you ever heard of Săpânța? Do you know where Săpânța is?

### 2) WHILE READING QUESTIONS

**Answer the following questions** (Introduction paragraphs 2 and 5, page 121)

- a) Who built the cemetery? When was it built?
- b) Where did the artist get the inspiration?
- c) Who are the main characters of the story? When does the story take place? What did they decide to do and where? Why did they go there?

**Correct the following sentences**

- a) They took a bus to go to Baia Mare
- b) They were exhausted because they couldn't sleep.
- c) They caught a train to go to Săpânța.
- d) The journey took three hours.
- e) They went by bike to *The Merry Cemetery*.
- f) They got angry when they first saw the cemetery.

**Answer the following questions** (page 123)

- a) What was there on top of the tombs?
- b) What do the images on the tomb depict? What were the Romanian peasants doing in the pictures?

**ION'S EPITAPH**

A) BEFORE READING ION'S EPITAPH ON PAGE 125 COMPLETE THE BLANK SPACES WITH THE VERBS IN BRACKETS USING THE *PAST SIMPLE OR PAST PARTICIPLE*)

Here I lay resting

And Ion Trucuta is my name

I \_\_\_\_\_ (*have*) a hard and difficult life

As I \_\_\_\_\_ (*to be*) neither nice nor good

I \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ (*drink, eat, gamble*) a lot

And I \_\_\_\_\_ (*make*) no effort to change my ways

I only \_\_\_\_\_ (*live*) for 40 years but I wish I had \_\_\_\_\_ (*live*) longer

And \_\_\_\_\_ (*get*) a little bit older

But now here I am with other dead people beneath the soil in this grave

B) NOW READ THE EPITAPH AND CHECK YOUR ANSWERS WHILE YOU LISTEN TO IT. THEN FINISH READING PAGE 125 AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

- a) Did Ion lead a good or a bad life? Why?
- b) How long did he live?
- c) What did the epitaphs tell about the dead?

C) READ PAGE 126 AND DO THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITIES:

- a) What was Eliana's, Octavian's and Mircea's problem?

Match the teens' names with their problem.

*e.g. Eliana: computer games...*

- b) What were the consequences of having such bad habits? Complete the chart.

ELIANA	OCTAVIAN	MIRCEA
<i>e.g. No time for her studies and family.</i>		

- c) Where did they sleep in the end and why?
- d) Why did they wake up?

D) QUESTIONS ON PAGE 129:

a) Where did the noise come from?

b) 1. What were the skeletons wearing? Tick the right pictures.



2. Find the names for the pictures with the answers in the word search:

E	O	H	O	D	B	R	B	J	Q	K	W	H	N	C	J
S	G	F	M	G	Y	K	L	G	K	E	E	I	H	U	I
V	W	O	N	S	C	E	T	B	C	C	Y	G	W	Q	L
D	Y	E	M	U	P	K	B	B	D	A	X	H	I	A	P
X	G	H	V	M	M	E	N	Q	F	L	O	E	G	A	V
A	K	L	A	Z	X	T	K	I	D	K	I	H	K	P	S
X	V	B	K	F	R	L	N	L	S	C	P	E	H	Z	A
V	X	D	U	O	Y	L	M	W	Q	E	G	E	N	O	E
W	J	N	L	E	R	H	B	B	S	N	J	L	T	Z	H
Z	B	U	L	U	C	S	O	Y	E	I	H	E	I	P	T
S	N	B	J	I	M	G	D	I	T	P	Q	D	Y	U	M
W	R	P	C	F	A	D	I	N	N	E	R	S	U	I	T
C	F	T	O	P	H	A	T	I	G	N	L	H	D	J	F
E	P	A	S	K	E	R	D	Q	H	J	K	O	S	W	Z
F	J	G	Y	K	E	X	A	Q	Z	H	V	E	N	K	F
A	L	P	L	N	Y	S	D	Z	I	V	O	S	T	U	U

dinner suit

high-heeled shoes

necklace

top hat

wig

- c) What kind of music did they dance to?
- d) What were the other skeletons doing? What was the skeleton who was alone doing?
- e) Why can't he party with the others?
- f) What was Ion's problem? What were the bad consequences?

E) QUESTIONS ON PAGE 131:

- a) Why did Octavian feel ashamed when he heard Ion's words?
- b) Why was not the skeleton playing with the others? What were the results of his behaviour?
- c) How did Eliana react when she heard the skeleton's story and why?
- d) Why could not the skeleton eat any cakes? What were the consequences of having an unhealthy diet?

F) QUESTIONS ON PAGE 133:

- a) What happened to Mircea's face when he heard the skeleton's story?
- b) What will happen to you if you eat too much fatty food and too many sweets?
- c) What happened when it started to get light?
- d) What did the skeleton give the teenagers?
- e) How did they know it was not a dream?

**3) AFTER READING ACTIVITIES**

1. *Phonetics* - Choose a page with some regular verbs on it, e.g. page 127. Make the students find them and classify them according to the final pronunciation of the final "ED".



/t/	/d/	/id/
	<i>Suffered</i>	<i>started</i>

If there are no examples of the three different pronunciations on the same page, get them to look for other examples in a different page. Play the listening so that they check their answers.

## 2. Writing

a) Imagine you are one of the teenagers and want to keep in touch with Ion. Write a letter saying how your life has changed thanks to Ion's advice.

b) Imagine you are one of the teenagers and want to keep in touch with Ion. Write a letter to him explaining how the journey back home went.

## 3. Oral activities

a) SS - Role play to practice modal verbs (must, should, mustn't, etc.)

Student A - Take one of the youngsters' role and tell Ion about your problem because you are looking for advice. Then swap roles and be Ion

Student B - Take Ion's role and give some advice to help Student A with his/her problem. Then swap roles and play the other teenager's role.

*E.g. Student A- Ion, I can't stop eating sweets and hamburgers when I feel nervous, what should I do?*

*Student B- Well, in your case you should eat healthier things like fruit and vegetables. You mustn't eat any fatty foods...*

b) SS - Pretend to be Ion and warn your classmates about the possible dangers of leading such a bad life.

*e.g. If you keep on playing computer games for a long time, you will not have enough time to play with your friends and you will lose their friendship.*

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Merry\\_Cemetery](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Merry_Cemetery) (retrieved 10 January 2015)