

A Time For Parades.

There is a festival in this town that brings in thousands of visitors, and livens(1) the valley for over a week. It's called Apple Blossom. By the name, you can tell that it coincides with the blossoming of the many apple trees that grow here. The weather is still playing a tug-of-war(2) between cold, windy days, and hot ones, but usually, by Apple Blossom, the sun is winning. For a few weeks leading up to the festival, groups of people are busy building floats that have varying(3) themes. There is always one for the three Apple Blossom princesses who have been elected by the local high schools. Their float is often something to do with Spring, or flowers. They stand and wave and look pretty; it must be a very hard job. And then there are all the floats of schools, sports groups, charities, and some businesses. If you are involved in one of these organizations, you have the opportunity to walk next to the float. My daughter, who does gymnastics, was chosen with her friends to hold the sign of the gymnastics group, while other girls and boys did cartwheels(4) and flips all along the road. I walked with the proud parents and handed out water bottles. It was very exciting. I was tempted to do a flip, just like the children were doing. But then I realized that if I did do one, it would be the very last thing that I ever did. So, I took photographs instead. I waved a little, trying to mimic(5) the princesses (my wave was better than theirs). A few people I knew were standing along the road; they called to me and waved. I began to feel famous. In fact, other people waved enthusiastically and called to me, "Oh hi there.." but then used a name like Angela, or Rebecca, or Mary. But I was caught up in the enthusiasm, so I waved back and smiled. What lovely confusion! The parade was a big event. There were bands and schools from all over the state, and visitors from Japan. A carnival had been set up down by the river, and a food fare was crammed(6) into one of the down town parks. There are so many people in the center of town for the parade that it's impossible to find parking close by, so you need to park far away on a street in the residential area. Our parade finished, we rested and had icecream, and then Domini and I had a long, hot hike back to the car.

1. To liven means to bring a place alive with excitement, movement, or color. It is often followed by the word 'up'.
 - a. The new paint in the kitchen really livens up the place.
 - b. When the DJ gets here, the party will liven up.
2. A tug-of-war is a game played where two people or groups pull on a long rope. The winning group is the one who manages to pull the opposing team over a half-way line.
 - a. We played tug-of-war, but our opponents won; they were much stronger than us.
3. Varying comes from the word 'vary' or the verb 'to vary' meaning to offer variety. It's pronunciation can be a bit tricky, so here's some practice.
4.
 - a. The artist's pictures were all blue, but varying in subjects.
 - b. I think that everyone enjoyed the comedian, to varying degrees.
5. To mimic means to copy, usually in action or a facial feature.
 - a. The monkey mimicked the lady drinking coffee.
 - b. The boy mimicked his teacher when he wasn't looking.
6. To be crammed comes from the verb 'to cram' which means to stuff or pack something in tightly (do you remember the phrase 'jam packed'?)
 - a. He crammed the crackers into his mouth and threw the empty packet in the bin.
 - b. The pencils are crammed so tightly in the box, that I can't get them out!

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