

The Brida Journal- Lesson

Email : daily@brida.eu

www.journal.brida.eu

The journal for learners of English, by learners of English

Welcome to the course: “Balloons”. This course is designed for level B1/C2 upwards.

Monica in Dublin makes dresses from balloons. Are you ready to make a fashion statement?

In this course you will:

1. Translate 40 words describing the person, the idea and the circumstance surrounding it.
2. Answer 15 questions related to the article.
3. Write a short essay using 3 questions as a guideline.
4. You are a bridesmaid with a mission! Speak, write WhatsApps and an email to achieve your goal.
5. Contribute to a discussion by reading and writing any comments left by other participants.

Extras

6. See some amazing pictures of Monica’s dresses.
7. Link to her social media pages to learn more.
8. You can download the lesson outline to do offline.
9. This exercise can be adapted to any situation Monica referred to in her advertisement text.

Have Ubuntu and be Hakuna Matata

Monica, in Dublin, is an artist.

This story started sometime in July or August when I saw the following advertisement in a Dublin listing:

“We launched a new product: Fancy Balloon Dresses. It is suitable for all occasions: parties, weddings, hen parties, birthdays, big events, grand openings, celebrations, proms, fashion, shop windows, launching products. Balloon decorations also available. “

followed by the contact details.

And then the pictures. Wow! A wearable dress, beautifully designed for a ball, made completely from balloons. I was stunned by the beauty, attention to detail and the fact, that this dress was on a mannequin, meaning, a woman could actually wear it! Imagine, coming to a party wearing a dress made from balloons. And it is not worn over your normal clothes! The balloon dress is it! Paris haute couture? Eat your hat! Milan? Go to Dublin! New York? You have even more Irish heritage!

I put the listing into the future file and started to think. This was an opportunity not to pass. But how would a person react, when somebody from France wants to take the balloon idea, and use it for educational purposes, embedded in some obscure project? I wrote an email, and after overcoming the initial reservations, we talked via WhatsApp video. By now, it was approaching the end of September.

Monica is a teacher, an artist and a person with unbounding creativity, an entertainer. Born in Romania, she and her family found themselves with an exceptionally talented son and few opportunities to encourage and develop this talent at home. She and her husband rolled the dice and in the early 2000s they ended up living in Dublin. Their son went to university and did his master's in music. Music being a financially challenging occupation, he decided to do a second master's in computer science.

Monica somehow managed to continue her teaching with special needs children, (children with disabilities), who need extra support. She had done this in Romania, but of course, in Romanian. The English had to be polished and, as anybody knows, setting up life in a different country, even within the EU, is not that easy. But a positive and fun attitude certainly helps.

We all have seen people make funny animals out of balloons. Tie several balloons together, and bingo, you have a tiger or a clown. Cute! But there is more!

Monica continued to explain to me that a balloon is not a balloon. Aside from your standard balloons which you can buy in a toy shop or arts & crafts stores, there are special balloons. Balloons come in different sizes, thicknesses, and lengths. Not to mention colours. But then, as

Monica showed me, balloons also come as multi-chambered objects. I saw a balloon with five different chambers. Play with that and a lot becomes possible.

When we spoke, she had started making another dress. I was allowed a glimpse of it. I saw lots of little balloons, blown and tied together in a cylindrical form. Being a night owl, it was being created with Rossini playing in the background.

Where did the idea for dresses come from? During the Spring lockdown, an opportunity presented itself whilst doing an online marketing course. Well, why not? Carpe Diem.

How does one order a dress? Well, that would really be fun! Monica would love for you to fly her out to your home so that you could have a personalized fitting. The cost may be one thing, the current times another, but the wow effect? Priceless!

Where does the creativity come from? A recent post on her Instagram page is revealing:

“... I decided I have to see Lion King, the latest version, as my school kids kept talking about for some reason and wanted to hear the song Hakuna Matata, over and over again every time I asked them to choose something...

I haven't seen this movie until yesterday.

As I was watching, my mind started to wander... All of a sudden, I stopped the movie and the image frozen on the screen stared at me. I stared back. I took my drawing kit, long left on a shelf and I draw THIS. In 10 minutes.

It was sooo relaxing. ,,

The picture is the profile of a very proud lion.

Having imagination, the right mixture of inspiration and most importantly, the ability to see and feel, beyond the end of one's nose and to combine all that, is not so difficult, as Monica explains:

It is very interesting, how a piece of music, a painting, a paragraph from a book or images and sounds come to one's mind as a muse. Cinderella's Ball Gown was an idea that came from an opera by Rossini. I listened to it last weekend and I just wanted to do something special. I hope you like it.

Art, education and having Ubuntu (humanity & sharing) and being Hakuna Matata (do not worry) is always possible. Even in this current climate, which is far from inviting. In the darkest of nights, there are always stars you can look up to.

You can admire Monica's spirit and work on the following social media channels.

Website : www.showtimeart.com

Facebook : <https://www.facebook.com/magic.balloons.art.entertaining>

Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/party_dublin/ &
<https://www.instagram.com/showtimeartmona/>

It is well worth a look – and, ladies, if you still need something for Christmas or New Year – do not let a pandemic stop you! Ring her before somebody else books.

Do not be surprised if she rides to you on her Harley Davidson. The one made from balloons of course!

Could there really be anything else?

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Vocabulary

1	Sometime in July	
2	weddings	
3	Hen parties	
4	Proms	
5	Stunned by the beauty	
6	Attention to detail	
7	It is not worn over normal clothes	
8	The dress is it!	
9	Eat your hat!	
10	An opportunity not to pass	
11	Embedded in an obscure project	
12	Overcoming initial reservations	
13	Unbounding creativity	
14	An exceptionally talented son	
15	Rolled the dice	
16	They ended up living in	
17	Somehow managed to continue to	
18	The English had to be polished	
19	Tie several balloons together	
20	Cute	
21	Aside from your standard balloon	
22	Arts & crafts store	
23	Different thickness	

24	not to mention	
25	A glimpse	
26	Tied together in a cylindrical form	
27	Being a night owl	
28	Would love for you to fly her to your home	
29	You could have a personalized fitting	
30	Cost may be one thing	
31	The wow effect? Priceless!	
32	My mind started to wander	
33	The image froze on the screen	
34	To see beyond the end of your nose	
35	In this current climate	
36	Which is far from inviting	
37	In the darkest of nights	
38	It's well worth a look	
39	Don't be surprised	
40	Could there really be anything else?	

Writing

Writing Exercise 1

1. What was Monica promoting?
2. What events can her dresses be used for?
3. What features do her dresses have?
4. How can you wear them?
5. What reactions could you expect if you wore one of her dresses?
6. What situation made Monica move to Dublin?
7. Was it her first and only choice?
8. What is Monica's other vocation?
9. What can you say about balloons?
10. Are her dresses prêt à porter ?
11. How does inspiration come to Monica?
12. Is that something only Monica has?
13. Where can you find out more about what she does?
14. What should you do a.s.a.p.?
15. What is one of Monica's mode of transport?

Writing Exercise 2

1. Go to the pictures section and look at the dresses on display. Describe what you see.
2. What do you like about these dresses?
3. Would you buy one? What instructions would you like to have when wearing one of her dresses?

Speaking Exercise 1

You are a bridesmaid and are planning the hen night of your best friend. You see the advertisement and think this is absolutely brilliant. You ring one of the other “girls”.

1. Introduce yourself as friends normally do.
2. Say a positive comment.
3. Refer to the article and give your opinion. Be really excited.
4. Say this is not up for discussion.
5. Ask the friend to ring you back.
6. Say a positive, exciting closing sentence.
7. Say goodbye.

Speaking Exercise 2

You are one of the “girls” and have just received the excited message from the chief bridesmaid. You ring back.

1. Greet your friend as friends normally do.
2. Say thanks for calling.
3. You think the idea is great.
4. The Bride must also have such a dress, but it should be a surprise.
5. Say a positive closing sentence.
6. Say goodbye.

Speaking Exercise 3

You are the chief bridesmaid, and have received a positive reply from one of the “girls”

1. Greet your friend as friends normally do.
2. Say thanks for calling.
3. Say you will send a WhatsApp to all the others in the group.
4. Say that you need your friend’s support. Especially with the English texts.
5. Say a positive closing sentence.
6. Say goodbye.

WhatsApp Exercises

WhatsApp Exercise 1

You are the chief bridesmaid, and you are now going to inform the other girls in the party that there is a “special uniform”. You send the group a WhatsApp

1. Greet the group in the appropriate manner.
2. Say a positive opening sentence.
3. Say that you have made a unilateral decision.
4. Instruct the group to look at Monica’s social media accounts.
5. List these accounts.
6. Ask them for their opinions?
7. Say an enthusiastic closing sentence.
8. Say goodbye.

WhatsApp Exercise 2

You have received a WhatsApp from the chief bridesmaid. You have seen Monica’s dresses. You write back.

1. Greet the person in the appropriate manner.
2. Say a positive opening sentence.
3. You are really excited; say why and say what design and colour you would like to wear.
4. Say a positive closing sentence.
5. Say goodbye.

WhatsApp Exercise 3

You have received a WhatsApp from the chief bridesmaid. You have seen Monica’s dresses. You write back.

1. Greet the person in the appropriate manner.
2. Say a positive sentence.
3. You like the idea, but you have some concerns about the practicalities.
4. Write your questions.
5. Say a positive closing sentence.
6. Say goodbye.

WhatsApp Exercise 4

You are the chief Bridesmaid. You have received all the replies. You write back.

1. Greet the friend in the appropriate manner.
2. Say a positive sentence about their enthusiasm.
3. Summarise the important points.
4. Say you will send Monica an email asking for clarification.
5. Say a positive closing sentence.
6. Say goodbye.

Email Exercise

Write an email to Monica. Summarize the situation so far. Ask the questions.

(Frank Peters will contact Monica to see if she will participate in this exercise. This will be done without any guarantees).