

B2-C1 Worksheet: Are Dutch Children Happier Because They Walk Together? - 18 June 2026

Article

Every June, children across the Netherlands take part in the Avondvierdaagse, a four-evening walking ritual that turns ordinary neighbourhoods into small festivals. Pupils, parents and teachers head out after school, often covering five or ten kilometres before returning home. To an outsider, the event may look like a cheerful tradition with coveted medals, flowers and sweets at the finish. Yet supporters argue that it also says something deeper about why Dutch children are often described as unusually happy and healthy.

The festival did not begin as a child-friendly celebration. It grew out of military marches in the early twentieth century, before gradually becoming a community event. Today, it seems to bring together several habits that matter for wellbeing: regular movement, independence, friendship and time outdoors. Children build up resilience by walking even when the weather is poor, catch up with classmates outside the classroom and learn that exercise can be social rather than competitive. Parents, meanwhile, can keep going beside them instead of simply watching from the side.

The ritual is not a perfect solution to every modern childhood problem. Some families find the distances demanding, and organisers sometimes struggle to find enough volunteers to chip in for four evenings in a row. Even so, the event has survived because it is local, inclusive and cherished. It encourages adults to look after public space, schools to pass on a shared tradition and children to experience a kind of screen-free togetherness that can feel quietly transformative.

True/False

Decide if each statement is True (T) or False (F).

1. The Avondvierdaagse is a four-evening walking ritual in the Netherlands.
2. The article says children usually walk only a few metres before going home.
3. Supporters connect the event with Dutch children being unusually happy and healthy.
4. The festival developed from military marches in the early twentieth century.
5. The article says the event is mainly competitive and not social.
6. Children may build resilience by walking even in poor weather.
7. Some organisers have difficulty finding enough volunteers.
8. The final paragraph argues that the ritual solves every childhood problem.

Phrase Match

Match the phrases (1-10) to the correct definitions (A-J).

Phrases (1-10)	Definitions (A-J)
1. take part in	A. to connect people in one shared activity
2. head out	B. to take care of something or someone
3. bring together	C. to develop gradually
4. grew out of	D. to participate in an activity
5. build up	E. to talk to someone after time apart
6. keep going	F. to give knowledge or a tradition to others later
7. look after	G. to leave and start going somewhere
8. catch up with	H. to help or contribute
9. chip in	I. to continue
10. pass on	J. to develop from something earlier

Synonym Match

Match the words (1-10) to the correct synonyms (A-J).

Words (1-10)	Synonyms (A-J)
1. ritual	A. freedom
2. unusually	B. life-changing
3. neighbourhoods	C. tradition
4. resilience	D. valued
5. independence	E. local areas
6. friendship	F. highly desired
7. cherished	G. welcoming
8. inclusive	H. exceptionally
9. transformative	I. companionship
10. coveted	J. toughness

Use the new language

Please choose 5 words or phrases and make your own sentence using the new word or phrase.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Discussion Questions

Student A	Student B
1. Did you often take part in community activities when you were a child?	1. Why might Dutch children score highly on happiness and wellbeing measures?
2. Would you enjoy a four-evening walking event in your neighbourhood?	2. Can a simple ritual genuinely influence childhood health and independence?
3. What kind of local tradition brings people together where you live?	3. Should schools take more responsibility for helping children move every day?
4. Do you prefer exercise that is social or competitive?	4. Is it realistic to expect volunteers to chip in for community events every year?
5. When do you usually catch up with friends outside work or study?	5. How can cities look after public space so children feel safe outdoors?
6. What outdoor habits helped you build up confidence as a child?	6. Do modern parents protect children too much, or not enough?
7. Would medals, flowers or small rewards motivate children to keep going?	7. Could a tradition like the Avondvierdaagse work in a hotter, busier or less walkable city?
8. What screen-free activity would you like to pass on to younger people?	8. What makes an activity inclusive rather than only suitable for confident or sporty children?

Answer Key

True/False: 1=T, 2=F, 3=T, 4=T, 5=F, 6=T, 7=T, 8=F

Phrase Match: 1=D, 2=G, 3=A, 4=J, 5=C, 6=I, 7=B, 8=E, 9=H, 10=F

Synonym Match: 1=C, 2=H, 3=E, 4=J, 5=A, 6=I, 7=D, 8=G, 9=B, 10=F

Example sentences with the phrases

1. Many families take part in the walk because it feels friendly and relaxed.
2. We usually head out after dinner when the weather is cooler.
3. A local festival can bring together neighbours who rarely meet.
4. Some modern traditions grew out of older military or religious events.
5. Children build up confidence when they complete a difficult route.
6. Good music helps tired walkers keep going near the end.
7. Volunteers look after the route and make sure everyone is safe.
8. Walking gives parents time to catch up with other families.
9. Local shops often chip in with snacks, flowers or small prizes.
10. Communities pass on traditions when children see adults enjoying them.