

- Help students to brainstorm about all the things American service men and women do and what they have done in the past. What personal characteristics do students think these people must share that makes them want to do these jobs? What might happen if we didn't have people to work in the Armed Forces? As a follow-up, students can write thank you letters to veterans for their service to the country. These can be delivered to local veterans' hospitals or veterans' homes.
- Election Day always happens on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November. Give students copies of November calendars from different years and help them to identify Election Day.

Suggested Internet Resources

Periodically, Internet Resources are updated on our web site at www.LibraryVideo.com.

- bensguide.gpo.gov/3-5/symbols/index.html
"Ben's Guide to U.S. Government for Kids" discusses songs and oaths, memorials and symbols.
- www.va.gov/kids/k-5/index.asp?intSiteID=2
The Department of Veterans Affairs introduces students in grades K-5 to Veterans Day and Memorial Day.
- www.takeyourkidstovote.org/youth/elementary.htm
The Council for Excellence in Government explains to kids ways they can get involved on Election Day.
- virtual-markets.net/vme/memorial/dvm_mem.html
This Memorial Day site contains links to a variety of resources on war and peace.

Suggested Print Resources

- Christelow, Eileen. *Vote!* Clarion Book, New York, NY; 2003.
- Gibling, James. *Fireworks, Picnics, and Flags: The Story of the Fourth of July Symbols.* Clarion Books, New York, NY; 2001.
- Golding, Theresa Martin. *Memorial Day Surprise.* Boyds Mill Press, Honesdale, PA; 2004.
- Granfield, Linda. *America Votes: How Our President Is Elected.* Kids Can Press, Tonawanda, NY; 2003.

TEACHER'S GUIDE

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National Observances

Grades K-4

Studying history is an essential part of understanding the world we live in today. The history of the United States includes the experiences and accomplishments of diverse peoples, from Native Americans and immigrants to the descendants of European settlers and of Africans brought here by force. Key events such as the Revolutionary War, the writing of the Constitution and the Emancipation Proclamation influenced how the nation developed. The study of history also involves facing painful aspects of the country's past, such as slavery and the treatment of Native Americans. Over time, songs, holidays and other observances have shaped and reflected how Americans see themselves and their country. History provides a framework for interpreting and living in the ever-changing present.



Program Overview

On certain days of national observance, people display flags, have parades, go on picnics and show their patriotism in a variety of ways. Veterans Day, once known as Armistice Day in recognition of the end of World War I, is a special day honoring all of the country's veterans. Memorial Day started as Decoration Day, the day when people decorated the graves of soldiers who had died in the Civil War. Over time, Memorial Day came to honor the soldiers killed in every war. Labor Day celebrates workers in all different types of jobs. Election Day is the day when people exercise their right to vote and to select government leaders. The oldest national observance is Independence Day. It was celebrated spontaneously for the first time in Philadelphia on July 4th in 1777, with bonfires and fireworks, starting traditions that have been followed ever since. These national observances recognize and honor many of the country's important people and occurrences.

Vocabulary

observances — Formal events recognizing special occurrences.

veteran — A person who has served in any branch of the military.

Armed Forces — The separate branches of the U.S. military, such as the Air Force, Navy, Army, Marines and National Guard.

armistice — An agreement by opposing armies to stop fighting.

memorial — In memory of.

labor — Work.

factory — A building in which things are manufactured.

union — A group of workers joined together for a common goal.

candidate — A person who wants to serve in an elected office.

political party — A group of people who share common political goals.

campaign race — Actions by candidates to win election to office.

debate — A public argument by candidates about election issues.

polling station — A place where voters go to vote in an election.

register — To sign up in order to be allowed to vote.

suffrage — The right to vote.

suffragette — A woman who campaigned for the right of women to vote.

patriotism — A feeling of loyalty and pride towards one's country.

Pre-viewing Discussion

- Ask students to describe what they did on the last July 4th. Why is this a day we celebrate? What do students like best about this national observance?
- Ask students to define the word "patriotic." What does it mean when someone is patriotic? Ask students to name people from either history or the present whom they consider especially patriotic and to explain their choices.
- Ask the class to brainstorm a list of as many jobs as they can think of that people in this country do. Why are these jobs important? In what ways are people recognized for the hard work that they do?
- America is often called the "land of the free." Ask students if they agree with this name and how they would describe freedom.

Focus Questions

1. How is Veterans Day different from Armistice Day — the original observance?
2. Why do people hang stars in their windows on Veterans Day?
3. Describe the way Memorial Day changed and developed over time.
4. Give three examples of unfair conditions that workers fought hard to change.
5. What is a union? Why are they important for workers?
6. What happens leading up to Election Day?
7. Name at least two groups of people who did not have the right to vote when the country was founded and now do. Why did these changes happen?
8. What does Independence Day celebrate? On what day is it held?
9. In what traditional ways and with what traditional colors is Independence Day celebrated?

Follow-up Discussion

- Ask students to discuss why many national observances are celebrated with parades. What do parades on different observances have in common? How are they different? What makes parades good ways to recognize and honor people or events?
- What are the ways individual families honor any of their members who have died in wars? What are ways other than observing Memorial Day that the nation uses to remember soldiers who have died?
- Throughout this country's history, certain groups have had to fight to gain the right to vote. Discuss with students why this has been the case. Why is it important that every adult American has the right to vote?

- In 1776, John Adams and others thought Independence Day would be celebrated on July 2nd, the day when colonial leaders decided to separate from England, rather than July 4th, the day they signed the Declaration of Independence. Ask students to discuss which day makes more sense to them and why.

Follow-up Activities

- In the 2000 U.S. presidential election, only slightly more than half of all people eligible to vote actually did so. Ask the class to consider why people might choose not to vote and to discuss why it matters if people vote or not. Students can design posters showing the importance of voting and encouraging people to turn out on Election Day.
- Ask students to imagine they have been given the responsibility to organize an Independence Day celebration for their class or for their local communities. What would they put into the program? How would their celebration honor the meaning of the 4th? In small groups, students can create a program for this special day. They should be sure to include as many activities as they can that honor the country's history. Students can also create a television or newspaper advertisement promoting their Independence Day event.
- Ask students to create a four-year November Election Day time line, beginning with the current year, and to find out which elected offices are filled each of the four years, including local, state and federal officials.
- Most national observances celebrate qualities such as patriotism, sacrifice and working for the good of the country. Help the class to generate a list of the events, activities and people that national observances honor and discuss what qualities these things share. Ask students to think of other people or events that share these qualities and also deserve special recognition. Working as a class, students can design a new national observance, deciding who or what is to be honored, on what day the observance should happen and how it will be celebrated.
- Because Veterans Day and Memorial Day both honor soldiers who have served in the United States military, people can easily confuse the meanings of the two observances. Ask students to create Venn diagrams comparing and contrasting these holidays.
- Invite students' parents or other people from the community to visit the class and discuss their different jobs. Encourage your visitors to bring items from their jobs such as uniforms, pictures or tools. Prepare for the visit by asking students to draft questions they'd like to ask. After the visits, students can use the information they have learned to create a class bulletin board about work and workers in the United States.

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