

Special Days and Holidays



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bestofthereader.ca

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Welcome


This e-book is part of a series called Best of The Reader. The stories in the e-books are from *The Westcoast Reader*. It is a newspaper for adults who are improving their English reading skills.


To the reader


- ✓ You can use this book in a classroom, with a tutor, or on your own.
- ✓ Each story has exercises to go with it. These exercises can help you improve your English and reading skills.
- ✓ You can check your answers at the end of the book.

Three reading levels

There are three reading levels in this book. Here are the symbols for each level:

Level 1 

Level 2 

Level 3 

To the teacher

Learners can read the articles and do the exercises individually, in pairs, or in groups.

The topics can be explored further through discussion or follow-up activities.

Teachers' Guide

The Teachers' Guide on this website has ideas on how to use the e-books with students.

Acknowledgements

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All of the material in this book first appeared in *The Westcoast Reader* (1982 to 2009). Some of the articles have been updated. Most of the exercises and activities for learners are based on material from *The Westcoast Reader Teachers' Notes* (1982 to 2009).

Credits

Photos

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How to say "I love you"

French: Je t'aime

Spanish: Te amo

Cree: Kisakihitin

Cantonese: Ngo oi ney

Russian: Ya tyebya lyublyu

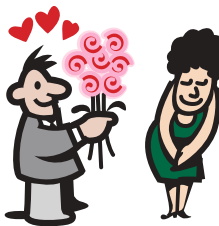


How do children celebrate?

Young children give each other valentines. They often make cards at school.



Valentine's Day is on February 14. It is a romantic day for many adults. They buy cards, chocolates or flowers for each other. They say, "I love you."



Cards

Some people send cards on Valentine's Day. They also send cards for other occasions. Choose a word from the box to go with each card. Write the word on the line.



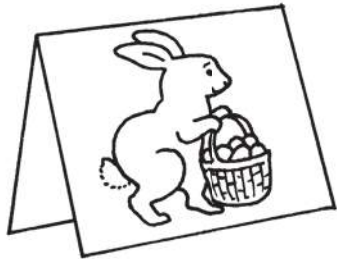
1 _____



2 _____



3 _____



4 _____



5 _____



6 _____

Easter wedding graduation Valentine's Day birthday Christmas



Thanksgiving

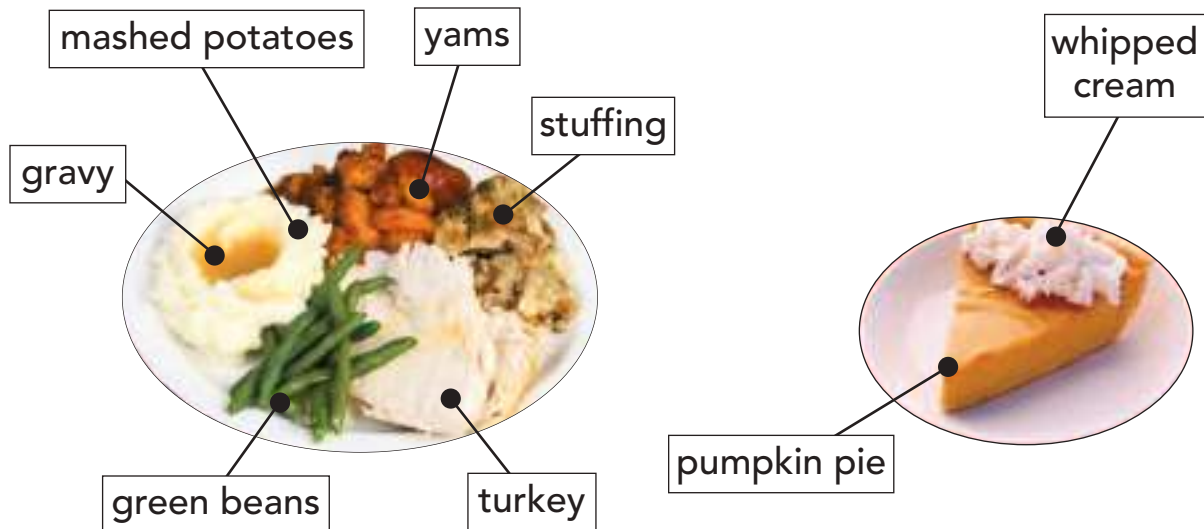
Thanksgiving is the second Monday in October.

Families and friends get together. They have a big meal.

Turkey and pumpkin pie are popular at Thanksgiving.



What's for Thanksgiving dinner?



■ Thanksgiving Day is the fourth Thursday in November in the United States.



Thanksgiving

Write answers on the lines.

1. When is Thanksgiving?

2. What do many people do for Thanksgiving?

3. What foods are popular at Thanksgiving?

Where do the words belong?

Write these 18 words in the correct boxes.

October Christmas
sister pie
turkey Monday
lunch uncle
Easter July
Thursday salad
husband breakfast
dinner Sunday
May Thanksgiving

months	food	days
family	meals	holidays



Halloween is on October 31.
In the evening,
children dress up in costumes.
They go trick or treating.
They visit neighbours
and ask for treats.
Most people
give the children candy.

Many people
carve jack-o-lanterns
for Halloween.



Tips to keep children safe on Halloween

 Many children go trick or treating on the evening of October 31.

Here are some tips to keep children safe on Halloween.

- ✓ An adult should go trick or treating with young children.
- ✓ Older children should trick or treat in groups.
- ✓ Adults and older children should carry flashlights.



✓ Remind children to look both ways before they cross streets.

✓ Check all the treats before children eat them.

✓ Make sure costumes are short. Children can trip on long costumes and fall.





How to carve a jack-o-lantern



- 1** Cut out the top of a pumpkin with a sharp knife.



- 2** Take out the seeds with a big spoon.



- 3** Draw a face on the pumpkin with a marker. Cut out the face with a knife.



- 4** Put a candle inside the pumpkin.

The Westcoast Reader 10/2004

Carve a jack-o-lantern

Here are six steps for carving a jack-o-lantern. Put them in the correct order.

- ___ Cut out the face with a knife.
- ___ Put a candle inside the pumpkin.
- ___ Cut out the top of the pumpkin.
- ___ Draw a face on the pumpkin.
- ___ Buy a pumpkin.
- ___ Take out the seeds.



Same word has different meanings

Sometimes a word can have different meanings. For example:

1. Children can **trip** on long costumes.
2. Ana took a **trip** to Mexico.

Here are some words that can have more than one meaning.
Match each word to one of its meanings.

- | | |
|--------------|-----------------------------------|
| ___ 1. tip | a. the sound a bell makes |
| ___ 2. test | b. a large stone |
| ___ 3. watch | c. to teach |
| ___ 4. ring | d. a clock you wear on your wrist |
| ___ 5. train | e. a useful idea or suggestion |
| ___ 6. rock | f. an exam |

 Do you know other meanings for these words?

Diwali

📖 Diwali is a popular fall festival in India. It is sometimes called the Festival of Lights.

Diwali marks the beginning of the new year for Hindus. Sikhs also celebrate Diwali.

Diwali traditions

- ✓ Many people wear new clothes on Diwali.
- ✓ They visit family and friends.
- ✓ They share sweet snacks.



- ✓ They decorate their homes with small oil lamps called *diyas*.



This is a symbol for Hinduism.

Vaisakhi

📖 Vaisakhi is in April. It is an important festival in parts of India.

Some Sikh communities in British Columbia have parades to celebrate Vaisakhi.



A Vaisakhi parade



This is a symbol for Sikhism.

Finish the sentences

Draw a circle around the correct answer.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>1. Diwali is a _____ festival.
a. spring
b. fall</p> <p>2. Sikhs celebrate _____.
a. Hanukkah
b. Vaisakhi</p> <p>3. People wear new _____
on Diwali.
a. clothes
b. hats</p> <p>4. Some Sikh communities
in B.C. have _____ for Vaisakhi.
a. art exhibits
b. parades</p> | <p>5. Many Sikh _____ wear turbans.
a. men
b. girls</p> <p>6. Diwali is sometimes called
the Festival of _____.
a. Lights
b. Food</p> <p>7. Vaisakhi is in _____.
a. November
b. April</p> <p>8. Diwali is the start of the new year
for _____.
a. Hindus
b. Muslims</p> |
|--|--|

Missing letters

Add the missing vowels (a, e, i, o, u) to finish each word. All these words are on page 12.

- | | | |
|------------------|------------|-------------------|
| 1. D__ w__ l__ | 5. spr__ng | 9. p__r__d__ |
| 2. S__kh | 6. n__w | 10. sw__ __t |
| 3. H__nd__ | 7. y__ __r | 11. c__l__br__t__ |
| 4. V__ __s__kh__ | 8. l__mp | 12. __pr__l |

Easter

Good Friday

📖 Good Friday is the Friday before Easter Sunday. It is a general holiday in most parts of Canada. Many businesses and schools close for the day.

On Good Friday, Christians remember the day Jesus died on the cross.



Easter Sunday

On Easter Sunday, Christians celebrate their belief that Jesus rose from the dead. Churches have special services.



Easter traditions

■ Children decorate eggs for Easter.



■ Young children look for coloured eggs and candy on Easter morning. They believe an imaginary rabbit called the Easter bunny hides the eggs.



Pascha

Easter is called Pascha in the Eastern Orthodox Church. In many years, Easter and Pascha are on different dates.



Pascha basket



This is a symbol for Christianity.

Finish the sentences

Fill in the blanks with words from the boxes.

1. Good _____ is a general holiday in most parts of Canada.
2. It is the Friday before Easter _____.
3. Many businesses and _____ close for the day.
4. Easter is a Christian _____.
5. On Easter, churches have special _____.
6. Children like to _____ eggs at Easter.

decorate

services

holiday

Friday

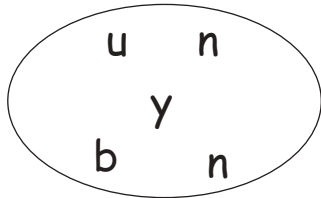
schools

Sunday

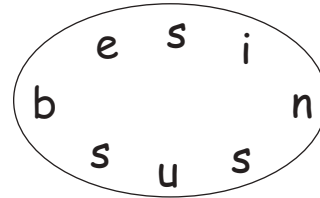
Scrambled eggs



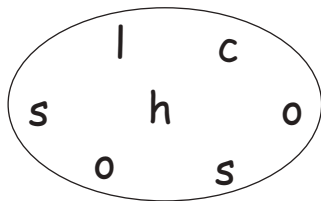
Unscramble the letters in the eggs. All the words have double letters.



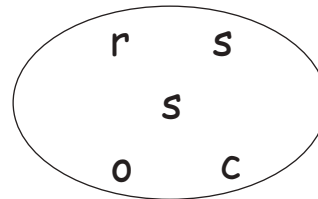
1



2



3




4

Hanukkah



A woman lights a hanukkah on the last night of Hanukkah.

 Hanukkah is a celebration of a great victory in Jewish history.

Hanukkah is usually between late November and late December. The holiday lasts for eight days.



This is a symbol for Judaism.

Traditions

■ During Hanukkah, families light candles on a candlestick called a *hanukkiah*.

There are eight candles on a hanukkiah—one for each night of Hanukkah. The ninth candle is the *shamash*. It is used to light the other candles.

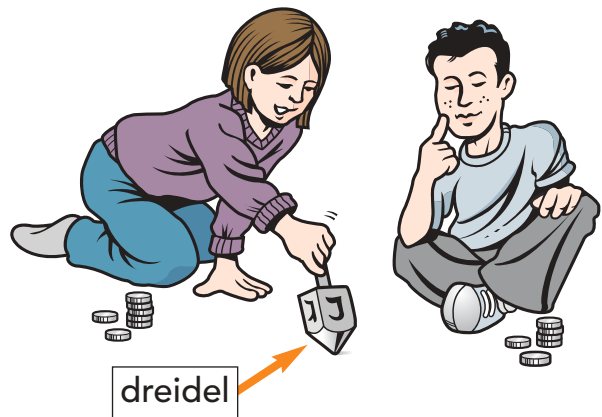


Hanukkiah

The middle candle is the *shamash*.

A hanukkiah is also called a Hanukkah menorah.

■ Children play traditional games such as dreidel (say: DRAY-dul). Each player takes a turn spinning a dreidel. It is a top with four sides. Players usually win chocolates or coins.



Find the words

Find these words in the puzzle.
Some words go across and
some go down.

candle	light
chocolates	menorah
coins	middle
days	spin
dreidel	top
eight	traditional

t	r	a	d	i	t	i	o	n	a	l
o	s	x	s	c	k	b	c	y	q	i
p	l	s	p	f	f	r	o	w	v	m
d	r	e	i	d	e	l	i	j	o	e
a	k	x	n	k	l	z	n	z	i	n
l	i	g	h	t	l	f	s	r	e	o
c	h	o	c	o	l	a	t	e	s	r
k	g	g	g	m	i	d	d	l	e	a
n	v	k	c	a	n	d	l	e	b	h
d	a	y	s	z	e	i	g	h	t	b

What word is missing?

Write the missing word in each sentence.

1. Hanukkah is Jewish celebration. _____
2. The holiday lasts for eight. _____
3. During families light candles on a hanukkiah. _____
4. A hanukkiah is sometimes a Hanukkah menorah. _____
5. Children traditional games at Hanukkah. _____
6. Hanukkah usually in November or December. _____

Norooz



A table set for Norooz

📖 Norooz is the the new year for Iranians. It begins on the first day of spring.

Families get together to celebrate the holiday.



Traditions

Norooz has many traditions. For example, Iranian families set a table called “haft seen.” Each item on the table has a special meaning. For example:

- coins for wealth
- garlic for health
- fruit for love



Which word does not belong?

Read the words in each row. First, cross out the word that does not belong. Then write the reason that it does not belong. Finally, write a new word that does belong.

1. tulip daffodil apple rose

Reason: _____

New word: _____

2. father year son mother

Reason: _____

New word: _____

3. Iran Paris Pakistan Iraq

Reason: _____

New word: _____

4. holiday spring summer fall

Reason: _____

New word: _____

5. April March June winter

Reason: _____

New word: _____

6. apple table apricot date

Reason: _____

New word: _____

What's the right word?



Draw a line under the correct word to finish each sentence.

1. Norooz is the new year for Iranians / Hindus.
2. Norooz ends / begins on the first day of spring.
3. Iranians set a table for Norooz called "haft seen" / "haji firuz."
4. Each item on the table has a special taste / meaning.
5. India / Iraq borders Iran.

Christmas

📖 Christmas Day is December 25. On this day, people celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. Churches have special services.



Traditions

There are many Christmas traditions. For example:

- People decorate a Christmas tree.



- They send cards.



- They exchange gifts.




- They enjoy special food.



- People say, "Merry Christmas and Happy New Year."

The Westcoast Reader 12/2007

Have fun during the holidays

 Go to a music concert. Many schools, churches, and community centres have free holiday concerts.



* Bake some cookies. Homemade cookies are a great holiday gift.



* Have a potluck dinner with family and friends. Everyone can bring some food to share.



* Go for a walk in your area. Look at the holiday lights.



* Collect food at your school or workplace. Donate the food to your local food bank.



The Westcoast Reader 12/2008



Make a simple gift

You will need

- ✓ 1 package hot chocolate mix



- ✓ 2 chocolate kisses



- ✓ 5 mini-marshmallows



- ✓ 1 candy cane



- ✓ 1 small clear bag



- ✓ ribbon

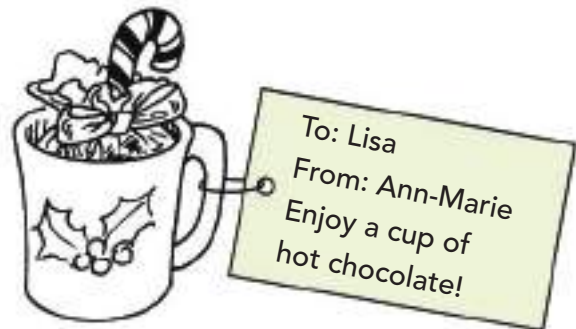


- ✓ mug



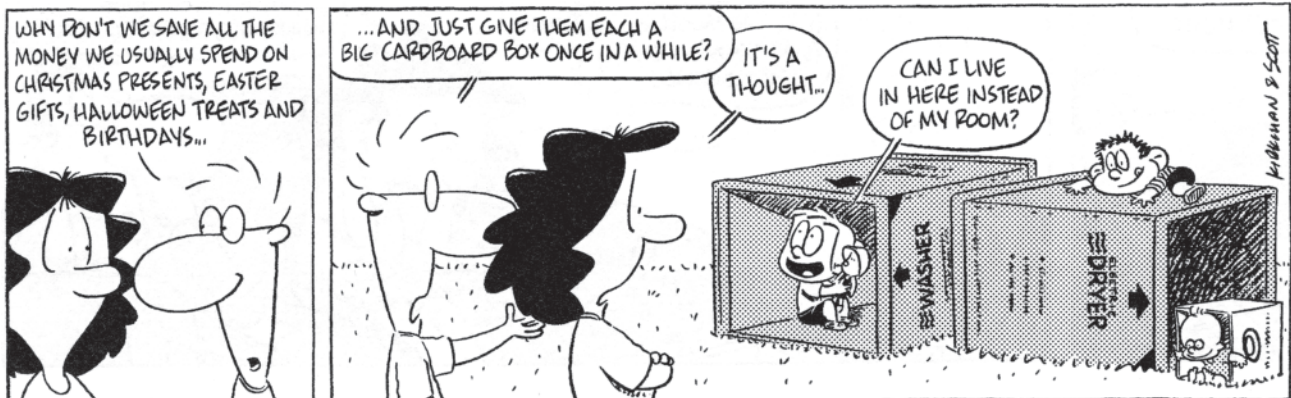
What to do

- 1 Put the chocolate mix, kisses, marshmallows, and candy cane into the bag.
- 2 Tie the bag with a ribbon.
- 3 Put the bag in the mug.
- 4 Add a gift tag.



The Westcoast Reader 12/2006

Baby Blues



Choose the correct words

Put a checkmark (✓) beside the two words that correctly finish each sentence.

1. Some people _____ gifts at Christmas.
 clean wrap exchange
2. Some people have a potluck _____ during the holidays.
 party card dinner
3. Some people bake _____ at Christmas.
 pumpkins cupcakes cookies
4. Some people donate _____ to their local food banks.
 food money stoves
5. During the holidays, some people go to a music concert at _____.
 a school a bank a church

Silent letters

Many words in English have silent consonants. For example, the “t” in “Christmas” is silent. Write the silent consonant in each word on the line next to the word. When you are finished, read the words to a partner.

- | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| 1. listen _____ | 5. calf _____ | 9. climb _____ |
| 2. walk _____ | 6. island _____ | 10. answer _____ |
| 3. wrap _____ | 7. honest _____ | 11. receipt _____ |
| 4. autumn _____ | 8. knock _____ | 12. scissors _____ |

Ramadan

📖 Ramadan is the ninth month of the lunar (moon) calendar. It is a very important month for Muslims.

During Ramadan, Muslims fast between dawn and sunset. This means they do not eat or drink during the day.

Muslims pray five times a day. They often say extra prayers during Ramadan.



End of Ramadan

Muslims celebrate at the end of Ramadan. The festival is called Eid al-Fitr.


People visit relatives and friends. They exchange gifts and cards. They give food to poor people.

Women decorate their hands with henna for Eid.



Islam



- Islam is a major world religion.
- Followers of Islam are called Muslims.
- The holy book for Muslims is the Qur'an (say: koh-RAHN).
- The symbol of Islam is a crescent moon and a star. 
- Many Muslims go to a mosque to pray.



Sharif Senebel is an architect. He designed this mosque in Port Coquitlam.

- There are about 1.6 billion Muslims in the world.
- More than 1 million Muslims live in Canada.

Finish the chart

Write the missing words to finish the chart.

World religions	Followers
Buddhism	Buddhists
Christianity	
Hinduism	
Islam	
Judaism	
Sikhism	

Religious symbols

Do you know these six religious symbols? Write the name of the religion under each symbol.



1



2



3



4



5



6

What's the word?

Draw a line under the correct word to finish each sentence.

1. Ramadan is an important day / month for Muslims.
2. During Ramadan, Muslims fast between dawn and sunset / midnight.
3. Muslims pray five times a day / night.
4. During Ramadan Muslims say fewer / extra prayers.
5. Eid is a festival at the end / beginning of Ramadan.
6. During Ramadan / Eid people visit friends and relatives.

Finish the sentences

Fill in the blanks with words from the boxes.

1. The symbol of Islam is a _____ moon and star.
2. The _____ book for Muslims is called the Qur'an.
3. Followers of _____ are called Muslims.
4. About 1 million Muslims live in _____.
5. There are more than 1.6 _____ Muslims in the world.

Ramadan

holy

Islam


billion

crescent

religion

Canada

New Year's

 People celebrate the new year in many ways. For example:

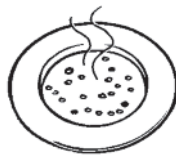
Canada

People stay up late on New Year's Eve, December 31. At midnight, they kiss and hug and make lots of noise.



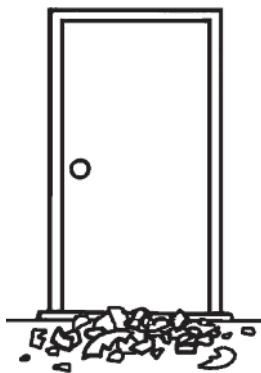
Brazil

Brazilians eat lentils on New Year's Day, January 1. Lentils signify wealth.



Denmark

People throw old dishes at their friends' front doors. A big pile of broken dishes means you have lots of friends.



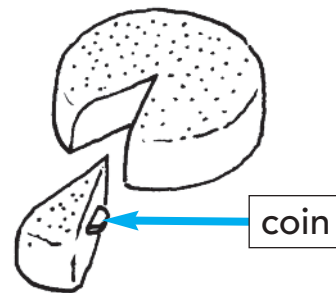
Puerto Rico

Children throw water out their windows to get rid of bad spirits.



Greece

Greeks eat a special cake called *vassilopita*. A coin is baked in the cake. The person who gets the slice with the coin will have good luck in the new year.



Spain

Spaniards eat 12 grapes at midnight. Each grape represents one month of happiness in the new year.



Happy New Year!

The Westcoast Reader 12/2008

New Year's traditions

📖 There are many traditions at New Year's.

Toasts

People often make toasts on New Year's Eve, December 31. Toasts are a way to say "Good luck" or "Good health."

In English, people usually say, "Cheers." What do people say in other languages?



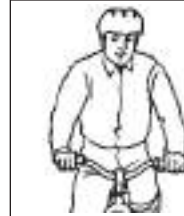
Can you match the toast with the language?

- | | |
|------------|-------------|
| 1. Salud | a. French |
| 2. Kanpai | b. Spanish |
| 3. Cin cin | c. Italian |
| 4. Santé | d. Swedish |
| 5. Skål | e. Japanese |

Resolutions

A popular tradition is to make resolutions for the new year. For example:

This year, I'm going to pay off all my debts.



I plan to ride my bike to work three days a week.

I'm going to quit smoking this year.



The Westcoast Reader 12/2007

Finish the sentences

Fill in the missing words. Use the information on page 27.

- 1 Spaniards eat 12 _____ at midnight on New Year's Eve.
2. People throw old dishes at their friends' doors in _____.
3. Canadians kiss and _____ on New Year's Eve.
4. In Brazil, people eat _____ on New Year's Day.
5. *Vassilopita* is a special _____ Greeks eat at New Year's.
6. On New Year's children in Puerto Rico throw _____ out their windows to get rid of bad spirits.

Nationality

This chart shows 6 countries and the nationality of the people in each country. Fill in the blanks to complete the chart.

Country	Nationality
1. Canada	_____
2. _____	Danish
3. Greece	_____
4. Spain	_____
5. _____	Puerto Rican
6. Brazil	_____


Remembrance Day



cenotaph

wreath

A Remembrance Day ceremony

 November 11 is Remembrance Day. We remember Canadians who died in wars. Many communities in Canada have special ceremonies on Remembrance Day.

Laying wreaths

Some cities and towns have cenotaphs to remember soldiers who died. People lay wreaths at cenotaphs on November 11.



Did you know?

■ Remembrance Day celebrates the end of the First World War. The war ended at 11 a.m. on November 11, 1918.

Red poppies

During the First World War, more than 60,000 Canadian soldiers died. Many were buried in an area of Europe called Flanders. Red poppies grew around their graves. Today, a red poppy is the symbol of Remembrance Day.



Veterans sell poppies

The Royal Canadian Legion sells plastic poppies for Remembrance Day. The legion uses the money to help veterans.



This veteran was a soldier in the Second World War.

Make a new word

Fill in the missing letters. Then take the circled letters and rearrange them to make a new word.

1. A red flower _____ o
2. First, _____, third o _____
3. Opposite of forget _____ o _____
4. Coins and bills _____ o _____
5. First _____ War _____ o _____
6. Eleventh month _____ _____ o _____

New word from circled letters _____

Correct the errors

There is one error in each sentence. Correct the errors.

1. Remembrance Day is on December 11.
2. People lay wreaths at doors on Remembrance Day.
3. The Second World War ended on November 11, 1918.
4. A purple poppy is the symbol of Remembrance Day.
5. More than 60,000 Mexican soldiers died during the First World War.
6. Many communities have special meals on Remembrance Day.

Lunar New Year

☞ Many people from Asia celebrate the Lunar New Year.

In China, Lunar New Year is also called Spring Festival. Chinese families have many new year's traditions. For example:

■ People pay off their debts before the new year begins. They clean their homes and put up decorations.



■ Families get together for a special meal. Everyone enjoys lots of snacks and sweets.



■ Children receive money in little red envelopes. It is called *lai see* or “lucky money.”



■ Some cities in Canada have parades for Lunar New Year.



Chinese lunar calendar

Each year of the Chinese lunar calendar is named after one of 12 animals.

Look on page 10 of *Word Games and Puzzles*. You will find a puzzle with the 12 animals of the Chinese zodiac.

The colour red

Draw a circle around the correct answer.

1. What is inside the red envelopes children receive for Lunar New Year?
 - a. money
 - b. candy
 - c. toys
2. Which red flower is the symbol of Remembrance Day?
 - a. rose
 - b. tulip
 - c. poppy
3. This gemstone is red.
 - a. diamond
 - b. emerald
 - c. ruby
4. Which planet is called the “red planet”?
 - a. Mars
 - b. Jupiter
 - c. Saturn
5. If you are red-faced, you are ____.
 - a. depressed
 - b. embarrassed
 - c. tired
6. The Red River is in this Canadian province.
 - a. Manitoba
 - b. Nova Scotia
 - c. Alberta

True or false

Write T if the sentence is true. Write F if the sentence is false (not true).

1. In China, Lunar New Year is also called Spring Holiday. ____
2. People pay off their debts before the new year begins. ____
3. At Lunar New Year, everyone enjoys lots of snacks and sweets. ____
4. Seniors receive money in little red envelopes. ____
5. Some cities in Canada have parades for Lunar New Year. ____
6. There are 10 animals in the Chinese lunar calendar. ____

Traditions

Many people have special traditions for holidays and celebrations. Traditions include customs or special ways of doing things.

Match the tradition with the holiday or celebration.

- | | |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| ___ 1. Lunar New Year | a. wear a red poppy |
| ___ 2. Thanksgiving | b. pay off debts |
| ___ 3. Diwali | c. go trick or treating |
| ___ 4. Hanukkah | d. cook a turkey |
| ___ 5. Valentine's Day | e. light small oil lamps |
| ___ 6. Easter | f. decorate eggs |
| ___ 7. Halloween | g. play a game with a dreidel |
| ___ 8. Remembrance Day | h. give chocolates to someone special |

What about you?

What is your favourite holiday? How do you celebrate?

Answers for exercises

Cards (p 6)

1. birthday
2. wedding
3. graduation
4. Easter
5. Christmas
6. Valentine's Day

Thanksgiving (p 8)

Possible wording

1. It is the second Monday in October.
2. Family and friends have a big meal.
3. Turkey and pumpkin pie are popular at Thanksgiving.

Where do the words belong? (p 8)

months: October, May, July

food: turkey, pie, salad

days: Thursday, Monday, Sunday

family: sister, husband, uncle

meals: lunch, dinner, breakfast

holidays: Easter, Christmas, Thanksgiving

Carve a jack-o-lantern (p 11)

5, 6, 2, 4, 1, 3

Same word has different meanings (p 11)

1e 2f 3d 4a 5c 6b

Finish the sentences (p 13)

1b 2b 3a 4b 5a 6a 7b 8a

Missing letters (p 13)

1. Diwali
2. Sikh
3. Hindu
4. Vaisakhi
5. spring
6. new
7. year
8. lamp
9. parade
10. sweet
11. celebrate
12. April

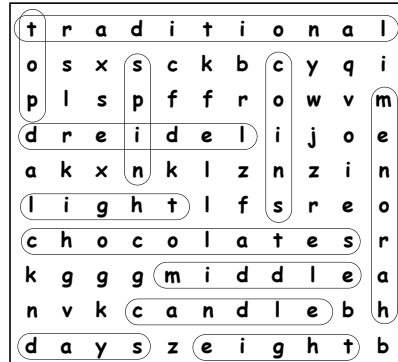
Finish the sentences (p 15)

1. statutory
2. Sunday
3. schools
4. holiday
5. services
6. decorate

Scrambled eggs (p 15)

1. bunny
2. business
3. follow
4. cross

Find the words (p 17)



What word is missing? (p 17)

1. a
2. days
3. Hanukkah
4. called
5. play
6. is

Which word does not belong? (p 19)

1. apple (It is not a flower.)
2. year (It is not a family member.)
3. Paris (It is not a country.)
4. holiday (It is not a season.)
5. winter (It is not a month.)
6. table (It is not a fruit.)

What's the right word? (p 19)

1. Iranians
2. begins
3. "haft seen"
4. meaning
5. Iraq

Choose the correct words (p 23)

1. wrap, exchange
2. party, dinner
3. cupcakes, cookies
4. food, money
5. a school, a church

Silent letters (p 23)

- 1t 2l 3w 4n
- 5l 6s 7h 8k
- 9b 10w 11p 12s

Answers for exercises

Finish the chart (p 25)

Buddhism	Buddhists
Christianity	Christians
Hinduism	Hindus
Islam	Muslims
Judaism	Jews
Sikhism	Sikhs

Religious symbols (p 25)

1. Islam
2. Judaism
3. Sikhism
4. Hinduism
5. Buddhism
6. Christianity

What's the word? (p 26)

1. month
2. sunset
3. day
4. extra
5. end
6. Eid

Finish the sentences (p 26)

1. crescent
2. holy
3. Islam
4. Canada
5. billion

Toasts Quiz (p 28)

- 1b 2e 3c 4a 5d

Finish the sentences (p 29)

1. grapes
2. Denmark
3. hug
4. lentils
5. cake
6. water

Finish the sentences (p 29)

1. Canada Canadian
2. Denmark Danish
3. Greece Greek
4. Spain Spaniard
5. Puerto Rico Puerto Rican
6. Brazil Brazilian

Make a new word (p 31)

1. poppy
2. second
3. remember
4. money
5. World
6. November

New word: symbol

Correct the errors (p 31)

1. December > November
2. doors > cenotaphs
3. Second > First
4. purple > red
5. Mexican > Canadian
6. meals > ceremonies

The colour red (p 33)

- 1a 2c 3c 4a 5b 6a

True or false (p 33)

- 1F 2T 3T 4F 5T 6F

Traditions (p 34)

- 1b 2d 3e 4g 5h 6f 7c 8a