

CONSULT

4

KIDS

**Celebrate America
3rd-5th Grade**

Celebrate America

Purpose: The purpose of this unit is to give students an opportunity learn about and celebrate American Holidays that honor great American's, either as individuals or a group—Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, President's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, and Veteran's Day.

This unit is developed so that there are some facts about the holiday and it lists resources that you might want to access. There is also an activity or exploration listed for each celebration, as well as an activity that focuses on the visual and performing arts.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

Background information:

In the United States we have a federal holiday to mark the birthday of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Dr. King was born on January 15, and in compliance with the federal Uniform Monday Holiday Act, his birthday is scheduled for the third Monday of January.

Dr. King was the spokesperson for the civil rights movement launch in the late 1950s but taking hold in the 1960s. Under his direction, those who believed in civil rights agreed to nonviolent activism. The first King Holiday was celebrated on January 20, 1986, 18 years after Dr. King was assassinated in April of 1968. All of the states were not supportive of Dr. King, so several resisted the time set aside to honor him. It was not until 2000 that all states elected to honor this American Hero.

Activity

Materials:

Books from Reading A-Z. This may be purchased for a subscription fee and there are 100s of leveled books on the site. Go to www.readinga-z.com

Directions:

1. Share the facts that you have with the students
2. Ask them to share with you what they know about Dr. King
3. Share with students perhaps one of his most famous speeches, "I Have A Dream!" (Text attached)
4. Talk about what a "dream" really is, and how you would work toward accomplishing a dream
5. Have students write the "I have a dream speech...." in a small group, being sure that they express themselves clearly. Instruct them that they will need at least 3 points.
6. Have students share with the other groups.

I Have A Dream (excerpts)

I am happy to join with you today in what will go down in history as the greatest demonstration for freedom in the history of our nation. [Applause]

Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of captivity.

In a sense we have come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men would be guaranteed the inalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check which has come back marked "insufficient funds." But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. So we have come to cash this check -- a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice. We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of now. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism. Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time to open the doors of opportunity to all of God's children. Now is the time to lift our nation from the quick sands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood.

Nineteen sixty-three is not an end, but a beginning. There will be neither rest nor tranquility in America until Blacks are granted citizenship rights. The whirlwinds of revolt will continue to shake the foundations of our nation until the bright day of justice emerges.

I say to you today, my friends, that in spite of the difficulties and frustrations of the moment, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal."

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at a table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a desert state, sweltering with the heat of injustice and oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.

I have a dream today.

I have a dream that one day the state of Alabama, whose governor's lips are presently dripping with the words of interposition and nullification, will be transformed into a situation where little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls and walk together as sisters and brothers.

I have a dream today.

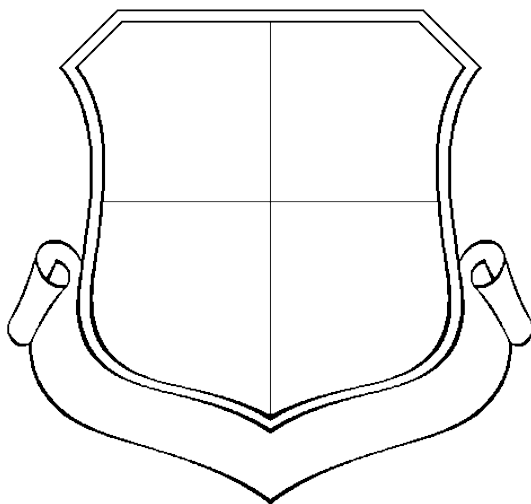
I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.

This is our hope. This is the faith with which I return to the South. With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.

This will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with a new meaning, "My country, 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing. Land where my fathers died, land of the pilgrim's pride, from every mountainside, let freedom ring."

Art Activity

When students have completed their I have a dream speech ask each student to illustrate his/her dream by creating a "Dream Shield" that includes the students name in a banner on the bottom and the dream that he/she has in the four quadrants of the shield.



President's Day

Background Information

President's Day began as a two day holiday to celebrate the birthdays of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. It is popularly believed that George Washington was born on February 22, 1732 and Lincoln was born on February 12, 1809. These two particular Presidents were honored because Washington was President when the country began and Lincoln held the office during the Civil War when the country was reshaped. In some school districts, both of these birthdays are still celebrated.

In 1968 Congress decided that it was important to create a uniform system of federal Monday holidays, so they voted to shift the existing holiday to Mondays. Washington's Birthday celebration was one of those. Lincoln's birthday was left as a state holiday to be celebrated or not celebrated based on individual state by state basis. In 1971, the new law went into effect and the third Monday in February was designated as Washington's birth celebration day. At that time it was suggested that the day be renamed to President's Day, but most felt that each President deserved special recognition.

In California, Idaho, Tennessee, and Texas chose to rename the federal holiday President's Day—and this phenomenon has taken hold. In 1999 legislation was proposed to ensure that Washington's Birthday be the Title of the Federal Holiday, but the bill did not move forward. So today we call it President's Day and we observe the role that all Presidents have played in the history of our country, but we still focus on both Washington and Lincoln and specifically honor their work and lives.

Activity

1. Have the students do some research about each of the Presidents that have served this country.
2. Have them find the information about birthday, term of service, and if applicable, the day of death. This can be done on the internet or by looking in an encyclopedia.
3. Create a timeline that marks each of these important dates.
4. Have students also find one fact about the President(s) that they researched to share with the class.

Activity

Presidential Penny

1. Have students work in groups of 2 or 3
2. Students select a President of interest to them
3. Students design a "penny" for the President of their choice
4. The front of the penny is a picture of the President
5. The back to the penny is a picture that represents the Presidential fact
6. Groups share their project with the other students.

President	Term	Birth Date
George Washington	(1789-1797)	February 22, 1732
John Adams	(1797-1801)	October 30, 1735
Thomas Jefferson	(1801-1809)	April 13, 1743
James Madison	(1809-1817)	March 16, 1751
James Monroe	(1817-1825)	April 28, 1758
John Quincy Adams	(1825-1829)	July 11, 1767
Andrew Jackson	(1829-1837)	March 15, 1767
Martin Van Buren	(1837-1841)	December 5, 1782
William Henry Harrison	(1841)	February 9, 1773
John Tyler	(1841-1845)	March 29, 1790
James K. Polk	(1845-1849)	November 2, 1795
Zachary Taylor	(1849-1850)	November 24, 1784
Millard Fillmore	(1850-1853)	January 7, 1800
Franklin Pierce	(1853-1857)	November 23, 1804
James Buchanan	(1857-1861)	April 23, 1791
Abraham Lincoln	(1861-1865)	February 12, 1809
Andrew Johnson	(1865-1869)	December 29, 1808
Ulysses S. Grant	(1869-1877)	April 27, 1822
Rutherford B. Hayes	(1877-1881)	October 4, 1822
James A. Garfield	(1881)	November 19, 1831
Chester Arthur	(1881-1885)	October 5, 1829
Grover Cleveland	(1885-1889)	March 18, 1837
Benjamin Harrison	(1889-1893)	August 20, 1833
Grover Cleveland	(1893-1897)	March 18, 1837
William McKinley	(1897-1901)	January 29, 1843
Theodore Roosevelt	(1901-1909)	October 27, 1858
William Howard Taft	(1909-1913)	September 15, 1857
Woodrow Wilson	(1913-1921)	December 28, 1856
Warren G. Harding	(1921-1923)	November 2, 1865
Calvin Coolidge	(1923-1929)	July 4, 1872
Herbert Hoover	(1929-1933)	August 10, 1874
Franklin D. Roosevelt	(1933-1945)	January 30, 1882
Harry S Truman	(1945-1953)	May 8, 1884

Dwight D. Eisenhower	(1953-1961)	October 14, 1890
John F. Kennedy	(1961-1963)	May 29, 1917
Lyndon B. Johnson	(1963-1969)	August 27, 1908
Richard Nixon	(1969-1974)	January 9, 1913
Gerald Ford	(1974-1977)	July 14, 1913
Jimmy Carter	(1977-1981)	October 1, 1924
Ronald Reagan	(1981-1989)	February 6, 1911
George Bush	(1989-1993)	June 12, 1924
Bill Clinton	(1993-2001)	August 19, 1946
George W. Bush	(2001-2009)	July 6, 1946
Barack Obama	(2009-present)	August 4, 1961

Memorial Day

Background Information

Memorial Day is observed the last Monday of May as a result of the uniform federal holiday act. Memorial Day was first begun as a way to remember the many Americans, from both North and South, who lost lives in the Civil War in the mid 1800s. This remembrance became known as Decoration Day when the memories of Americans who died in World War I were also honored. As time has gone on, this day has been set aside to honor all men and women who have served in the United States military. During the Memorial Day weekend, citizens and family members often visit cemeteries where relatives and loved ones are buried. Also, this is a special time for families to enjoy one another and spend time at picnics, Memorial Day parades, or other activities that remind us of how important family is and how this value of family was protected by service men and women.

Originally, Memorial Day was celebrated on the 30th of May. There has been a degree of controversy over “moving” this celebration to the last Monday in May. Several times since 1987, Senator Daniel Inouye of Hawaii, a World War II veteran has introduced an amendment to return Memorial Day to the 30th, but the Monday holiday is now widely accepted. The Indianapolis 500, an auto race, has been held in conjunction with Memorial Day since 1911.

Activity

Have students contact the local Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) organization in town

Invite a speaker (usually a Veteran) to come and talk with the students about his/her experience

Prepare students by having them do some research on the service provided by the VFW visitor that will be visiting. Have students prepare several questions that they would like to have answered. Avoid questions that have to do with details such as “How many people have you killed?” and “What was the worst thing you experienced?”

Activity

Memorial Day Windsock

1. You will need: red, white and blue construction paper; glue, crepe paper streamers (both red and blue), an red or blue yarn
2. Have students decorate the construction paper with cut out stars and stripes (these can be glued on)
3. Across the bottom edge, glue 12” crepe paper strips
4. Make a cylinder out of the construction paper (glue, tape or staple together)
5. Attach yarn to the top to hold the windsock as it is hung up to honor Memorial Day

Independence Day

Background Information

The United States celebrates its Independence Day on July 4.

The Fourth of July, or Independence Day, honors the nation's birthday -- the signing of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. It is a day of picnics and barbecues, patriotic parades, and a night of concerts and fireworks. The flying of the American flag is widespread.

In the words of Founding Father John Adams, the holiday would be “the great anniversary festival. It ought to be commemorated as the day of deliverance. ... It ought to be solemnized with pomp and parade, with shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires, and illuminations, from one end of this continent to the other, from this time forward forever more.”

The history of our Independence Day celebration dates back to the 1770s, when the original 13 colonies were still under the rule of England's King George III. Although they had no representation in Parliament, they had to pay tax to England. For years, Congress sought unsuccessfully to resolve the dispute between England and the colonies. Finally, in 1776, the Second Continental Congress appointed a committee, headed by Thomas Jefferson, to draft a declaration of independence. On July 4, 1776, Congress officially adopted the document declaring their freedom from England. Although the signing of the Declaration was not complete until August, the Fourth of July has been accepted as the official anniversary of American independence.

By the early 1800s the tradition of parades, picnics and fireworks was established as the way to celebrate America's birthday. The holiday was already widely observed throughout the nation when Congress declared it a federal holiday in 1870.”

<http://www.calendar-updates.com/info/holidays/us/independence.aspx>

Activity

1. Share the words of America the Beautiful with the students.
2. Divide students into groups of 3-4
3. Give each group a stanza of the poem to illustrate
4. When this is completed, have all groups share their posters

America the Beautiful
Words by Katharine Lee Bates,
Melody by Samuel Ward

Stanza 1

O beautiful for spacious skies,
For amber waves of grain,
For purple mountain majesties
Above the fruited plain!
America! America!
God shed his grace on thee
And crown thy good with brotherhood
From sea to shining sea!

Stanza 2

O beautiful for pilgrim feet
Whose stern impassioned stress
A thoroughfare of freedom beat
Across the wilderness!
America! America!
God mend thine every flaw,
Confirm thy soul in self-control,
Thy liberty in law!

Stanza 3

O beautiful for heroes proved
In liberating strife.
Who more than self their country loved
And mercy more than life!
America! America!
May God thy gold refine
Till all success be nobleness
And every gain divine!

Stanza 4

O beautiful for patriot dream
That sees beyond the years
Thine alabaster cities gleam
Undimmed by human tears!
America! America!
God shed his grace on thee
And crown thy good with brotherhood
From sea to shining sea!

Labor Day

Background Information

Labor Day has been set aside as an opportunity to honor the working men and women of this country. It is also celebrated in Canada. The first Labor Day celebration was a parade in New York City on September 5, 1882. This first Monday in September was selected because it is ½ way between July 4th (Independence Day) and Thanksgiving Day (held toward the end of November). The idea of celebrating working people spread across the country before Labor Day became a federal holiday.

Labor Unions, organizations that represent American workers, credit Peter McGuire, general secretary of the Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners and the co-founder of the AFL (American Federation of Labor) came up with the idea to demonstrate the solidarity of labor. Others give the credit to Matthew Maguire from Paterson, New Jersey who became the secretary of the Local 344 of the International Association of Machinists. Either way, honoring the American worker makes sense.

It was President Grover Cleveland who signed a law designating the first Monday in September as Labor Day nationwide. Traditionally, schools began the Tuesday after Labor Day. However, with changing school calendars this is no longer the case.

Activity

Career Search

1. Brainstorm with students the jobs that their parents do and the other jobs that they know about
2. Divide students into groups of 2-3
3. Have them select a career and research that career on line or in the encyclopedia
4. Have the group create a skit or poster that will share the information with rest of the class

Veteran's Day

Background Information

November 11 marked the end of World War I. This war was designated as the "war to end all wars". President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed Armistice Day on November 11, 1919 a holiday. He stated, "To us in America, reflections of Armistice Day will be filled with solemn pride in the heroism of those who died in the country's service and with gratitude for the victory, both because of the thing from which it has freed us and because of the opportunity it has given America to show her sympathy with peace and justice...." He was referring to being freed from the aggressive actions of the German-led coalition that began the war by invading another country.

The United States Congress passed a concurrent resolution seven years later on June 4, 1926, requesting that the President Calvin Coolidge issue another proclamation to observe November 11 with appropriate ceremonies which was approved May 13, 1938, and made November 11th a legal holiday. It was determined that his day would be focused on world peace and the desire to live in harmony with people around the world

Alfred King, a shoe store owner from Emporia, Kansas, requested the Armistice Day be transformed into Veteran's Day so that it could honor ALL of America's veterans, in 1953. President Dwight Eisenhower, a former army general, signed it into law on May 26, 1954. On June 1, just 5 days later, Congress replaced the word "Armistice" with the identifier "Veterans." In 1971 the Veteran's Day observance was moved to the fourth Monday in October. However, there was extreme resistance to this notion and by 1978 the celebration and remembrance was returned to November 11.

While Memorial Day honors those who have died in service to the United States, Veteran's Day celebrated those who have served this country in war and survived to serve this country in peace as well.

Activity

Find a list of service men and women from your area who are currently serving in the military

Brainstorm things that students want to know about the person's service, i.e. what type of food do they have, do they miss their family, what will they do when they get home, what is the most interesting part about their work...etc.

Review the format of a friendly letter with the students

Have students work alone or with a partner to write a letter to one of the identified service people

Go on line at the following address to find the procedures for addressing letters:

<http://www.anysoldier.com/FAQ.cfm>



For more information, contact
Consult 4 Kids at

www.consultfourkids.com