

Reading. Start with the Warm-Up questions and then read the article with a partner or in a small group.

The History Behind Mother's Day

By ESL Made Easy



Although Mother's Day is a well-known celebration across North America, its origins are very different from the event we know today. Mother's Day has become a time to celebrate the role of mothers and to spoil them with gifts and special meals. It's also a time to treat them to a day of taking it easy. Mother's Day was once an event to show appreciation for the role women played in society. While Mother's Day is likely to have originated from the celebration of Goddesses by the Romans and the Greeks, the modern day celebrations originate in the United States and this is predominantly due to the actions of three determined women.

In 1858, during the American Civil War, Ann Marie Reeves Jarvis recruited women in her area to join Mothers' Day Clubs. This group of women aimed to improve health conditions and bravely looked after men fighting on both sides. Ann arranged the first Mothers Friendship Day in 1868 to lay differences aside, share experiences and celebrate the end of the war.

Julia Ward Howe, the second woman, was a suffragist and an anti-slavery activist who took inspiration from Ann's work. It was her belief that women were the demographic most affected by the consequences of the war and aimed to get

women to work towards peace. In 1870, she formed the Mothers' Day Proclamation. Although she lobbied for this, she had very little success.

The third woman who made a significant contribution to the event we celebrate today was Ann Marie Reeves Jarvis' daughter, Anna. When her mother died in 1905, she made it her mission to have the invaluable service of mothers to humanity recognized. She turned this into a religious celebration by encouraging the second Sunday of each May to be dedicated to celebrating mothers.

Once Anna had gained support, it became a national holiday in the U.S. in 1914. However, a change was made. The apostrophe was moved and this changed it from Mothers' Day, celebrating their role in society, to Mother's Day, celebrating their role within the family unit. Until her death, Anna Jarvis fought endlessly and tirelessly for the day not to become commercialized. In the end, her fight was unsuccessful. She died in a nursing home without a penny to her name as a direct result of continuing to fight for her mother's cause.

Mother's Day has now become a very consumer-oriented event with people happy to shell out money to make their mothers happy on this one special day. It is one of the highlights of the year for those in the floristry, greetings cards and novelty gifts industries. Very few people know the serious origins of this important day and understand its true meaning and significance.

In spite of the commercialization, women across the globe are continuing to fight for recognition for their contributions to both the family and society as a whole, just as the three women who made Mother's Day such an important event during their time.

A. Warm-Up

Discuss the following questions with your partner or in a small group.

- Do you celebrate Mother's Day or a similar day in your home country? If so, how is it celebrated?
- What special roles do mothers play in the family in your culture? What about in the community?
- Compare the differences and similarities between each kind of mother: *A mother-in-law, a stepmother, a birth mom, an adoptive mom, a single mom, and a stay-at-home mom.*
- In your opinion, what makes someone a good mother?

B. Vocabulary Bank

Find the following words/phrases in the reading. Then match the words/phrases on the left with the correct meaning on the right. Try not to use a dictionary.

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| 1. Taking it easy | — | a. Having the most important influence |
| 2. Spoil | — | b. To come together as one |
| 3. Predominately | — | c. Job/goal |
| 4. Recruited | — | d. To argue/campaign for a cause |
| 5. To lay differences aside | — | e. To pay |
| 6. Suffragist | — | f. Very helpful |
| 7. Lobbied | — | g. To be very poor |
| 8. Mission | — | h. Enrolled |
| 9. Invaluable | — | i. New and unique |
| 10. Without a penny to your name | — | j. Relax |
| 11. To shell out | — | k. A supporter of women's rights |
| 12. Novelty | — | l. Indulge/pamper someone |



C. Dig Deeper

Answer the following questions based on the reading. Try to use words from the vocabulary bank in your answers.

1. Where is Mother's Day likely to have originated from?
2. What did Ann Marie Reeves Jarvis's group of women do?
3. What was Julia Ward Howe's belief? Was she successful in her actions?
4. Who was Ann Marie Reeves's daughter? What was her daughter's mission?
5. What was the meaning behind moving the apostrophe in Mothers' Day to Mother's Day?
6. When did Mother's Day become a national holiday in the U.S.? When is Mother's Day celebrated?
7. In what ways has Mother's Day become a commercialized event?

D. Stretch Your English

Discuss the following questions with words from the vocabulary bank with a partner or in a small group.

1. Can you think of some holidays that have become **commercialized**? Explain what usually happens?
2. What are some **novelty** gifts people usually receive in your home country on special days?
3. When you want to **take it easy**, what do you usually like to do? What about members of your family?

TEACHER NOTES - SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

The *Let's Talk About* reading and worksheet is ideal for a multi-level **intermediate/advanced** class, a small group, or one on one teaching. The worksheet is designed as a student-centred activity where students work together on all sections in order to develop and enhance their conversational skills. The suggested activities can be modified for **high beginner** activities.

STUDENT-CENTRED APPROACH TO LEARNING ALLOWS STUDENTS TO:

- listen and take turns talking
- summarize information
- ask questions and share information
- describe events, problems, or solutions
- present and exchange ideas, opinions or feelings
- provide reasons in support of ideas, opinions or feelings
- agree or disagree with others

**SUGGESTIONS FOR WORKING WITH A CLASS, A SMALL GROUP OR ONE ON ONE****Part A: Warm-Up**

Each lesson starts with general warm up questions that students read individually and then discuss either in a small group or with a partner. Answers are then compared with the rest of the class to stimulate interest and engage all students prior to moving on with the remainder of the worksheet. If working one on one, discuss these questions with your student.

READING

The reading is designed to stimulate students' interest based on a current and relevant theme or topic. Give students time to read out loud to each other or silently on their own. If working one on one, you can take turns reading together so that the student can hear correct pronunciation and intonation.

Part B: Vocabulary Bank

Words/phrases from the reading are used in the vocabulary bank exercise. Have students locate the words in the reading and then try to match them with the appropriate definition on the right. This exercise is best done with students working with a partner or in a small group.

Part C: Dig Deeper

Students continue discussing the reading using the comprehension questions with a partner or in a small group.

Part D: Stretch Your English

Stretch Your English gives students an opportunity to reinforce some of the vocabulary bank words in their discussions. Have students work together with a partner or in a small group.

After students have completed the worksheet, have them take turns reading out-loud or listening to the teacher read for correct pronunciation and intonation. After reading as a class, take up the answers for Parts B and C. If there is time, discuss some questions in Parts A and D.

INTERMEDIATE/ADVANCED LEARNERS: *(with a partner or in a small group)*

1. Discuss the Warm-Up questions in **Part A** with a partner or in a small group.
2. Work together or alone on the Vocabulary Bank exercise in **Part B**.
3. Discuss or write the answers out to questions in **Part C** together or alone.

HIGH BEGINNER LEARNERS: *(with a partner or on your own)*

1. Think about the Warm-Up questions in **Part A** and see if you can understand them. Use the dictionary to help you with the words.
2. Find and circle in the reading the vocabulary bank words in the left column in **Part B** of the worksheet. Write out the definitions of the words using a dictionary. Make sure the correct definition is used so that it is consistent with how it is used in the article. Match the words on the left to the correct meanings on the right.
3. Find some of the words and phrases from the questions in **Part C** in the article. Try to answer them if you can.

WORKSHEET EXTENSIONS:

- Working with a partner or in a small group, briefly summarize the reading.
- Write a brief summary (4-5 sentences) about the main idea in the reading.
- Create some possible questions based on the reading. (**Ex:** *Who was Julia Howe? What did Ann Marie Reeves do?*)
- Write out some possible answers for the questions in **Part D**. Use some of the vocabulary from **Part B** and from the reading in your answers.
- Research another interesting article about **Mother's Day** and share it with the class or with a partner.

TEACHER NOTES:**VOCABULARY BANK ANSWERS:**

1j, 2l, 3a, 4h, 5b, 6k, 7d, 8c, 9f, 10g, 11e, 12i