



American Holidays | Lesson Plan

What is the significance of major American holidays and how do they reflect the history and cultural values of the United States?

Students will learn how holidays like Independence Day, Thanksgiving, Memorial Day, and Veterans Day encapsulate key aspects of American heritage and values.

Learning Objectives:

- Understand the origins and purposes of significant American holidays.
- Reflect on how these holidays contribute to the national identity and collective memory.
- Discuss the ways in which holidays can unite and educate communities about American history and values.

Key Vocabulary:

- **Federal holiday:** A public holiday recognized by the United States government.
- **Independence Day:** Celebrates America's declaration of independence from the British Empire in 1776.
- **Thanksgiving:** Commemorates the Pilgrims and Native Americans' three-day celebration, thanking God for a successful harvest.
- **Martin Luther King Jr. Day:** Honors MLK's birthday and his contributions to racial equality.
- **Washington's Birthday:** Celebrates the birthday of George Washington, the first U.S. president.
- **Columbus Day:** Acknowledges the accomplishments of Italian explorer Christopher Columbus and Italian-American contributions.
- **Veterans Day:** Originally Armistice Day, honors living U.S. military veterans who have served their country.
- **Memorial Day:** Remembers military personnel who have died in the service of the United States.

Educational Standards: CCRA.L.1, CCRA.L.2, CCRA.L.4, CCRA.L.5, CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.2, CCRA.R.4, CCRA.R.6

Academic Subject Areas: Civics, U.S. History, Western Civilization

What You'll Need

- Video: *Street Smarts: American Holidays* (Watch [Here](#))
- Worksheet: *Street Smarts: American Holidays* (Click [Here](#))
- Whiteboard and markers

Scan to watch episode:



- Images of different American holidays (Independence Day, Thanksgiving, Memorial Day, Veterans Day)

Lesson Plan (45 minutes)

Warm Up: (15 minutes)

1. Start the class by asking students to share their favorite holiday and explain why they enjoy it. Write their answers on the whiteboard.
2. Show images of different American holidays (Independence Day fireworks, Thanksgiving dinner, Memorial Day parades, Veterans Day ceremonies). Ask students to identify the holidays and share any traditions or activities they know or participate in during these days.
3. Lead a brief discussion on what holidays represent beyond just a day off from school or work. Guide students to consider how holidays might reflect the history, values, and culture of a nation.
4. Introduce the concept of "national identity" briefly. Explain that it encompasses the shared characteristics, values, and beliefs that define the people of a nation. Ask students how they think holidays might contribute to a country's national identity.
5. Explain the term "collective memory" as the shared pool of memories held by a group of people that is passed from one generation to the next. Ask students to consider how holidays can serve as a form of collective memory, helping people remember important events and individuals in history.
6. Give each student a copy of the "Street Smarts: American Holidays Worksheet" and display it on a screen. Inform students that they will now delve deeper into specific holidays to understand their origins, meanings, and roles in shaping American society and culture.

Watch and Complete: (20 minutes)

1. Watch the video as a class, answering the blanks on the worksheet as each question is addressed in the video.
2. Pause the video after each key question and concept is presented. Encourage students to share their answers to check for accuracy.

Wrap-Up: (10 minutes)

1. After the video, allow students to ask questions or express their opinions about what they learned about American holidays.
2. Collect the completed worksheet as a formative assessment or participation credit.

Don't have time for the full lesson? Quick Activity (15 minutes)

Distribute the worksheet and allow students to complete it while they follow along with the video.