Special Days and Holidays

Joan Acosta
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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

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Valentine’s Day

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.”

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.
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 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?

- mashed potatoes
- yams
- gravy
- stuffing
- green beans
- turkey
- whipped cream
- pumpkin pie

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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>October</th>
<th>Christmas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sister</td>
<td>pie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>turkey</td>
<td>Monday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lunch</td>
<td>uncle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easter</td>
<td>July</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>salad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>husband</td>
<td>breakfast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dinner</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>Thanksgiving</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>months</th>
<th>food</th>
<th>days</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>family</td>
<td>meals</td>
<td>holidays</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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.
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*.

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 Hinduism.

This is a symbol for Sikhism.
Finish the sentences

Draw a circle around the correct answer.

1. Diwali is a _____ festival.
   a. spring
   b. fall

2. Sikhs celebrate _____.
   a. Hanukkah
   b. Vaisakhi

3. People wear new _____ on Diwali.
   a. clothes
   b. hats

4. Some Sikh communities in B.C. have _____ for Vaisakhi.
   a. art exhibits
   b. parades

5. Many Sikh _____ wear turbans.
   a. men
   b. girls

6. Diwali is sometimes called the Festival of _____.
   a. Lights
   b. Food

7. Vaisakhi is in _____.
   a. November
   b. April

8. Diwali is the start of the new year for ________.
   a. Hindus
   b. Muslims

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
2. S__kh 6. n__w
3. H__nd__ 7. y__ __r
4. V__ __s__kh__ 8. l__mp
9. p__r__d__
10. sw____t
11. c__l__br__t__
12. __ pr__l
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.

Scrambled eggs

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

1. ___________________

2. ___________________

3. ___________________

4. ___________________
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.

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

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.

  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.

Hanukkah is a symbol for Judaism.

This is a symbol for Judaism.

dreidel
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

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 is 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 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.”
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.
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.

To: Lisa
From: Ann-Marie
Enjoy a cup of hot chocolate!

Baby Blues

Why don’t we save all the money we usually spend on Christmas presents, Easter gifts, Halloween treats and birthdays...

...and just give them each a big cardboard box once in a while? It’s a thought...

Can I live in here instead of my room?
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 _____ 2. walk _____ 3. wrap _____ 4. autumn _____
   5. calf _____ 6. island _____ 7. honest _____ 8. knock _____
   9. climb _____ 10. answer _____ 11. receipt _____ 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.

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Write the missing words to finish the chart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>World religions</th>
<th>Followers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buddhism</td>
<td>Buddhists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christianity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hinduism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islam</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judaism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sikhism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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
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!
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. Skal    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.

I’m going to lose 20 pounds this year.
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Canada</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. _______</td>
<td>Danish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Greece</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Spain</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. _______</td>
<td>Puerto Rican</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Brazil</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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.
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 ____ ____ ____ ____ 〇
2. First, ___, third 〇 ____ ____ ____ ____ ____
3. Opposite of forget ____ ____ ____ 〇 ____ ____ ____ ____
4. Coins and bills ____ 〇 ____ ____ ____ ____
5. First ___ War 〇 ____ ____ ____ ____
6. Eleventh month ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ 〇 ____ ____

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.
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.

**Did you know?**

- Each year of the Chinese lunar calendar is named after one of 12 animals.
- 2019 is the Year of the Pig.

Look on page 10 of *Word Games and Puzzles*. You will find a puzzle with the 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. 2019 is the Year of the Dragon. ____
**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

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

Finish the sentences (p 15)
1. statutory 3. schools 5. services
2. Sunday 4. holiday 6. decorate

Scrambled eggs (p 15)
1. bunny 2. business
3. follow 4. cross

Find the words (p 17)

Find the words (p 17)

What word is missing? (p 17)
1. a 4. called
2. days 5. play
3. Hanukkah 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 3. “haft seen” 5. Iraq
2. begins 4. meaning

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)

What's the word? (p 26)
1. month  3. day  5. end
2. sunset  4. extra  6. Eid

Finish the sentences (p 26)
1. crescent  3. Islam
2. holy  4. Canada  5. billion

Toasts Quiz (p 28)
1b  2e  3c  4a  5d

Finish the sentences (p 29)
1. grapes  4. lentils
2. Denmark  5. cake
3. hug  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  4. money
2. second  5. World
3. remember  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