**PLAN :**

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22. **CHRISTMAS**

The population of the USA is made up of people of different nationalities. Centuries ago they brought with them their native celebrations. Some holidays which are marked in the US originated in America. There is no provision for national holidays in the USA. The number of holiday is different in different states – from 8 in the District of Columbia to 20 in Oklahoma.

#### NEW YEAR’S DAY

####  *Love and joi come to you,*

#####  And to you your wassail, too !

 *And God bless you and send you*

#####  A happy new year !

 Although in the United States the official holiday is January the 1st, the celebration really begins on December 31st. New Year’s Day is celebrated with parties which last beyond midnight so that everyone can see in the New Year and watch the Old Year out. Theatres, night clubs, restaurants are crowded. At 12:00 midnight when the ringing of bells popping of champagne bottles and fire crackers, and blowing of sirens and whistles announce the start of New Year. People throw streamers and confetti, shake hands, exchange kisses and embraces, and wish each other a “Happy New Year !” Some people gather in the street of big cities, they ring bells, shoot of guns and firecrackers. January 1st is celebrated with parades in some cities. One of the noisiest and most crowded of New Year’s Eve celebration take place in New York City at Time Square. Thousands of New Yorkers gather there, and millions of Americans across the country join them by TV.

 Following a long, chaotic New Year’s Eve, Americans spend a quiet New Year Day. In most households everyone sleeps late, often enjoys meals and TV with the family and friends. Two famous New Year’s Day festivals are showed for national viewing: the Tournament of Roses and Mummer’s Parade. Both of these events have been American traditions for more than half a century.

 The Mummer’s Parade, which take place in Philadelphia is a ten – hour spectacle. It was introduced in the US by Swedish immigrants. There are clowns, musicians, dancers – all led by King Momus dressed in bright satin.

 The Tournament of Roses take place in Pasadena, California. Prizes are awarded to the cities with the most unusual and attractive floral displays. After the parade, the Rose Bowl football game, a struggle between two top - ranking college football teams, is played. Those events attract thousands of tourists and millions of TV viewers.

 Besides champagne, streamers and noisemakers, other symbols of the New Year celebration include a clock or hour glass, an old man symbolizing the Old year, and a new baby symbolizing the New year. This may be an allusion to the ancient Roman god Janus, for whom the month of January is named. Legend has it that Janus had two faces, one looking into the past, and the other looking into the future. This certainly personifies the sentiments of many people who, on New Year’s Day think both about the past year with its achievements and shortcomings as well as looking forward with hope to a new and better year to come. Sincere and practical, many Americans even write down their “New year resolutions” to do specific things like giving up smoking, going on a diet, getting up earlier, spending less money on clothes, etc. Even though such resolutions are rarely kept, at least they make for a good laugh when the next New Year comes.

#### MARTIN LUTHER KING’S BIRTHDAY

  *“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…”*

 *Martin Luther King*

 On January 15th, people in the United States celebrate the birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr. He was a great civil rights leader who fought against racial discrimination. He said that people should be judged by their characters, and not the color of their skin. He believed in integration. He received national attention when he protested the injustice of segregated buses in Alabama.

 Martin Luther King is remembered in church memorial services, marches, and public ceremonies. People also listen to his speeches, watch TV documentaries, and sing spirituals and the civil rights anthem “We Shall Overcome.” In schools, students read about this leader, study his writings and celebrate his memory with special programs. Politicians and performers also participate in celebrations to honor Martin Luther King.

 The third Monday in January is a legal holiday to honor Martin Luther King.

#### ST VALENTINE’S DAY

#####  It’s Valentine’s Day. And in the street

 *There’s freezing rain, and slush, and sleet.*

 *The wind is fierce. The skies are gray.*

 *I don’t think I’ll go out today.*

 *But here inside the weather’s warm.*

 *There is no trace of wind or storm.*

 *And you just made the morning shine.*

 *You said you’d be my Valentine.*

 Valentine’s Day is celebrated on February 14th. It isn’t a national holiday. Banks and offices are open this day, but it is a happy little festival in honor of St Valentine, patron sweethearts and lovers. In this day school children typically make valentines for their teachers and classmates and put them in a large decorated mailbox. It is customary on the day to send a “Valentine”, a card with affectionate message to someone you love, or to your best friends or a little present. The greeting cards are often colored red trimmings and pictures of heart.

 Whatever the reasons, Americans of all ages love to send and receive valentines and to hear and sing the thousands of new and traditional love songs which flood television and radio programs on that day.

 Among all the red hearts, birds, love letters, candies, chocolates and kisses which comprise symbolism and realia, Cupid or Eros is the unquestioned favorite in personifying the spirit of the day. According to Greek ( later Roman ) tradition. Cupid was the eternally child – like son of Venus, the goddess of love. Although he remained a baby, he could fly and was equipped with a tiny bow and countless golden arrows special power, and that is why if Cupid shot you with his arrow, you would fall in love with the first person you met.

 So St Valentine’s Day is the day of love for many people.

#### PRESIDENT’S DAY

 Until 1986 this holiday was in fast two holidays: Abraham Lincoln’s Birthday, celebrated on February 12, and George Washington’s Birthday, celebrated on February 22. Their birthdays are celebrated on the 3rd Monday in February.

 Abraham Lincoln was President during the Civil War ( 1861 – 1865 ). He led the fight to keep the nation together and free the slaves. His life ended tragically. He was killed at the theatre during the performance soon after the victory of the North. In honor of this great man a beautiful memorial has been built in Washington, D. C.

 George Washington led the American Army to victory in the War for Independence. Later he was elected President of the United States and was in office for 8 years (1789 –1797). The national capital of the United States, a state and several towns are named after George Washington. In addition to commemorating the birth of the US’s first President, it’s a great day for shoppers. The department stores of Washington, D. C., started a national tradition of sales marked by unusual bargains. The US Congress observes the birthday of G. Washington with speeches and reading from his works.

#### ST PATRIC’S DAY

 *It’s a great day for the Shamrock,*

 *For the flags in full array,*

 *We’re feeling so inspirish,*

 *Sure because for all the Irish*

 *It’s a great, great day!*

 On March 17th,  Americans celebrate an Irish religious holiday, St Patrick’s Day. It is a day to remember the Irish people in the United States and Ireland. Ireland is a country with a lot of green grass and shamrocks. Shamrock are small plants with three leaves. There is a lot of green in Ireland, so green is Ireland’s national color.

 People often wear green clothes on St Patrick’s Day. There are parades in many cities with large Irish population, but the largest parade is in New York. Many people go to parties. They sing, dance, and eat Irish food. Some drink green beer.

 St Patrick was a priest in Ireland many years ago. He taught the Irish people about God. St Patrick died on March 17th in the year 461.

 Beginning in 1845, many Irish people moved to the United States. They came because there wasn’t enough food to eat in Ireland. St Patrick’s Day celebrations helped the Irish remember their country, their music and their families. Many Americans say, “Everyone is Irish on St Patrick’s Day.”

#### APRIL FOOL’S DAY

 *The first of April, some do say,*

 *It set apart for All Fool’s Day.*

 *But why the people call it so,*

 *Nor I, nor they themselves do know.*

 *But on this day are people sent*

 *On purpose for pure merriment.*

 April Fool’s Day is celebrated on April 1st. It is the day for harmless tricks and good laughs. The origin of April Fool’s Day or All Fool’s Day goes back to the dilemma faced by many Europeans in 1562 when Pope Gregory introduced a new calendar, one which shifted the start of new year from its traditionally warm nesting place of April 1st to the cold and dreary date of January 1st.

 Today in the United States both children and adults play small tricks on each others. If the trickster is still around he or she may take credit for his deed by shouting “April Fool !” but probably not before you’ve spoiled your cup of morning coffee or tea. If you are innocent victim of such mischief, your first reaction may be to “wring the scoundrel’s neck.”

 American author and satirist Mark Twain summed up the nature of the holiday thus: “The first of April is the day we remember what we are the other 364 days of the year.”

EARTH DAY

 *The earth is a garden.*

 *It’s a beautiful place.*

 *For all living creatures,*

 *For all the human race*

April 22 is a special day around the world. On that day inhabitants of Earth celebrate Earth Day. Earth Day is a time when many people show that they care for our fragile planet. They show concern about the threats the planetfaces – destruction of the rain forest, holes in the ozone layer, the greenhouse effect, too much garbage, and all forms of air and water pollution. It is a day for people to learn what they can do to preserve the planet Earth.

The first Earth Day was held in the U.S. twenty two years ago, in April 1970. At that time, Americans were just beginning to learn about the problems facing the planet.

#### TAKE YOUR DAUGHTER TO WORK DAY

 This holiday is celebrated on April 28th. Schools are closed this day and girls go to work to their mothers. It is very important holiday, because girls know that can become anything they want when they grow up. If the mothers don’t work the girls stayed at home and mothers teach them to cook, to work at home and to hold the house.

#### EASTER

######  Easter is a Christian religious holiday. Ibis memory of Resurrection of Jesus Christ. It falls on the first Sunday after the first full moon between March, 22, and April, 25. The 40 days before Easter are called Lent. Just before Easter, schools and colleges usually close. The students have a week or ten days of spring holidays.

 Easter is a church holiday, and many churches have an outdoor sunrise service. On the night before Easter, an imaginary creature known as the Easter Bunny comes to visit children and leaves a basket filled with candy in the shape of eggs, bunnies and baby chicks. Another tradition is painting hard – boiled eggs different colors and designs on them. It is common to hide these eggs, as well as candy eggs, for children to look for an Easter Sunday as part of an Easter egg hunt.

#### MAY DAY

 *It’s May! It’s May! The lusty month of May,*

 *That lovely month when everyone goes*

 *Blissfully astray !*

 The roots of the May Day celebration go back to very ancient time and are evident in many civilizations, where basically the idea was to express gratitude to the gods for the renewal of spring. May Day was not widely celebrated in the United States during its early years, because the Puritans disapproved of frivolous festivities.

 Some American parents and teachers use this holiday as a chance to encourage their children and students to bring some surprise and joy into the life of the lonely or aged. They make May baskets filled with flowers and candy and hang them on doorknobs throughout their neighborhoods, sometimes ringing the bell, hiding, and watching smiles replace frowns and unexpected joy light up the wrinkled faces of their neighbors.

#### MOTHER’S DAY

 *“M” is for the million things she gave me.*

 *“O” means only that she’s growing old.*

 *“T” is for the tears she shed to save me.*

 *“H” is for her heart of purest gold.*

 *“E” is for her eyes, with lovelights shining.*

 “R” means right she’ll always

 *Put them all together; they spell “mother”,*

 *A word that means the world to me.*

 In the United States Americans honor their mothers and grandmothers, on the second Sunday in May. This day is set aside to show love and respect for mother. On Mother’s Day children give thanks for the support, love, care, and guidance. Giving cards and gifts is also tradition. Children often make Mother’s Day gifts in school. Pin cushions, sachets, tie clasps, decorated boxes and picture frames, recipe holders, and plaster – cast hand prints are all popular favorites. Another common gift for mothers is the “mother ring,” a ring set with the birthstones of each of the members of the family.

 Mother’s Day was first proclaimed a national holiday by President Woodrow Wilson in 1915. The idea of honoring mothers on a special day started with Ann Jarvis, from Grafton, West Virginia, who chose the second Sunday in May and began the custom of wearing a red carnation if one’s mother was still living and a white carnation if one’s mother was deceased. If the latter is the case, many people visit their mother’s grave side and dedicate the day to their mother’s memory.

MEMORIAL DAY

 The last Monday in May is Memorial Day. This is a national holiday to remember the dead. The first Memorial Day was many years ago after the Civil War (1861 –1865). After the war, people wanted to remember the dead. So around 1866, people began to decorate the graves of Civil War soldiers. People called this day Decoration Day or Poppy Day (Poppies are small red flowers).

 On the Memorial Day, Americans honour the servicemen who gave their lives in past wars. Schools, clubs and churches decorate the cemeteries. They put up the flags on the graves of the army, navy and airmen. They hold memorial services in churches, halls, parks and cemeteries.

 In addition to solemn services Memorial Day is often marked by other, more joyful ceremonies: colorful parades, sports competitions.

FLAG DAY

 *Then hurrah for the flag, our country’s flag,*

 *Its stripes and white stars, too.*

 *There is no flag in any land*

 *Like our own Red, White and Blue.*

 On June 14th, 1777, the United States adopted its first flag. Today Americans honor the US flag each year on June 14th. Flag Day is a national commemorative day. It is not a holiday from work. Many people fly the flag outside their homes and businesses on this day.

 The American flag has different names. One name is “The Red, White, and Blue.” This name is for the colors of the flag. Another name is “The Stars and Stripes.” This name is for the 50 stars and 13 stripes.

 The flag did not always have 50 stars and 13 stripes. In 1777, the original flag had 13stars and 13stripes for the 13 colonies. The 13 colonies became the first 13 states. Then more states joined the United States. In 1794, the flag had 15 stars and 15 stripes. Then more states joined. This created a problem for the flag makers. The flag was getting too big! So in 1818, Congress decided to have only 13 stripes on the flag. They decided to add one star for each new state. So now there are 50 stars and 13stripes on the flag.

#### INDEPENDENCE DAY

 *America, America,*

 *Land of hope and liberty,*

  *Freedom rings from every mountain,*

 *From sea to sea.*

 July 4th is Independence Day. Another name for Independence Day is the Fourth of July. On this day in 1776 the final of the Declaration of Independence, written by Thomas Jefferson, was adopted.

 Independence Day is a national holiday. Government offices, banks, and schools close. Most people don’t go to work. Families and friends get together outside for picnics and cookouts.

 Traditionally the Fourth of July is celebrate with firing of guns and fireworks, parades open – air meetings and speeches praising “Americanism, democracy, free enterprise.”

 Independence Day isn’t only day for cookouts, noise, and fireworks. It is also a day to think about freedom. The Declaration of Independence says everyone has the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The Declaration of Independence more than 200 years old, but its ideas are important today.

#### FATHER’S DAY

 *Everything to both of us is so new.*

 *As you learn about the world*

 *I learn about you,*

 *There’s no need to fear.*

 *Daddy will be here,*

 *And I’ll love and care for you*

 *Through the years.*

 People in the United States honor their fathers with special day: Father’s Day. This holiday is celebrated on the third Sunday in June.

 Father’s Day dates back to 1909, when one daughter, a certain Mrs. Dodd from Spokane, Washington, wanted to honor her own father who had raised four sons and a daughter after her mother’s death. Although the first Father’s Day was observed in Spokane in 1910 and it has been likewise observed in many other states for many decades, Father’s Day did not become a national holiday until Senator Margaret Chase Smith helped to establish it as such in 1972.

 Giving cards and gifts is the tradition of this holiday. Children make them in schools. Many people make their own presents. Greeting cards, stores, florists, candy makers, bakeries, telephone companies and other stores do a lot of business during this day.

#### LABOR DAY

 Labor Day is a legal holiday. It is celebrated each year on the first Monday in September. It was planned as a day to honor workers in America and to give them a long weekend holiday from work.

 Labor Day was started in 1882 by a union called the Knights of Labor. The first celebration was a long parade followed by a picnic in New York City. In 1894 Congress made it a legal holiday.

 Labor Day is traditionally celebrated with parades, speeches, and recognition of the labor unions. Labor Day sales are a popular event held on this holiday. Barbecues and picnics are popular on Labor Day. They mark the end of the summer season. Schools usually open after this holiday.

#### COLUMBUS DAY

######  The American continent was discoved in 1492 by the Spanish seaman Christopher Columbus. Columbus is said to be the first Euaropen man, stepping on the American land, and that day, when it was happend, the 12th of October, became the holiday, which is called Columbus Day. This holiday is celebrated in 34 States of the USA and Puerto Rico. There are parades and parties in San Francisco and New York. One of the squares of New York is called Columbus Circle with the monument of Columbus in the middle of it.

###### HALLOWEEN

 *It’s Halloween! It’s Halloween!*

 *The moon is full and bright*

 *And we shall see what we can’t be seen*

 *On any other night.*

 Halloween is the day or evening before All Saints Day. The name is a shortened version of “All Hallows Eve” the night before All Saints Day which is celebrated on November 1st by the Catolic Church. Halloween customs date back to a time when people believed in devils, witches and ghost. They thought that these evil spirits could do all kinds of damage to property. Some people tried to ward off witches by paintings signs on their barns. Others tried to scare them away by nailing a piece of iron, such as horseshoe, over the door.

 Now most of people do not believe in evil spirits. On this day they just have a nice holiday. Children dress up as ghosts and witches and go out into the street to beg. They from house to house and say: “Trick or treat!”, meaning “Give me a treat or I’ll play a trick on you”. People give them candy, cookies and apples. This custom comes from the Celts in ancient Britain who feared the coming of winter and dressed in frightening costumes so the demons of winter would think they were one of them and do them no harm. Hence, the origin of costumes for today’s celebration: It represents a devil coming to your home whom you can placate with a treat.

 A favorite custom is making a jack – o – lantern. Children scrape out a pumpkin and cut the outlines of eyes, nose and mouth in its side. They light a candle inside the pumpkin to scare their friends. This custom refers to a man named Jack who still wanders around the earth lighting his way with a pumpkin lantern.

#### ELECTION DAY

 The first Tuesday after the first Monday in November is Election Day. It is a legal holiday. Since 1845, by Act of Congress, this date has been set aside for elections.

 On this day American citizen elect their public officials, president, congressmen, governors, mayors and judges. All states require that voters be citizens of the United States.

 “Election Day” sales in stories are very popular on this day. The night of the election, people watch the election results on TV. They listen to the speeches made by the winners.

#### VETERANS DAY

 November 11th is a national holiday. Veterans Day is a day to remember and honor all those Americans who served in the armed forces and particularly those who fought during the Spanish – Americans War, World Wars I and II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War. People also remember those soldiers missing in action. This day reminds people of the courage and patriotism of all men and women who serve their country.

 President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed November 11th as Armistice Day so Americans would not forget the tragedies of war. In 1954 Congress changed the name to Veterans Day to honor all United States veterans. It is also a day dedicated to world peace.

 On this day, the radio and television broadcast services held at the National Cemetery in Arlington. High officials come from Washington to attend these services. They place a wreath of flowers at the tomb of the Unknown Soldier. All stand in silence for a few minutes at eleven o’clock to honor the memory of the serviceman killed in the two World Wars.

#### THANKSGIVING DAY

 *When Pilgrims sailed to this new land,*

 *They met a friendly Indian band.*

 *The Indians taught them to plant, hunt, and fish,*

 *Then they all had a feast with many a tasty dish.*

 Thanksgiving Day is marked on the fourth Thursday of November in memory of the first Thanksgiving Day held by the early Pilgrim settles in Massachusetts in 1621, in gratitude for the successful harvest. They experienced difficulty in those early times and survived only with the help of American Indians who taught them how to grow and harvest indigenous foods such as squash and corn. The first Thanksgiving day lasted three days and was celebrated with their Indian friends.

 Thanksgiving was proclaimed a national day of observance by Congress in 1941 .

 Thanksgiving Day is a four – day holiday for most Americans. This is a family holiday. Families come together from near and far. In some places special religious services are held in the morning. Then comes the traditional feast. Turkey with stuffing is the main dish. It is served with sweet potatoes, squash, cranberry sauce, and pumpkin pie. Apple cider is the drink of the day.

 Football is the most popular game on this day. Usually there are several football games to watch on TV. There is Thanksgiving Day Parade in New York City.

 Stores, classrooms, and homes are decorated with turkeys, pilgrims, Indians, wreaths of dried flowers, and vegetables. Horns of plenty are also very popular.

#### CHRISTMAS

 *It’s time for hanging stockings,*

 *It’s time for riding sleighs,*

 *It’s time for jolly greeting,*

 *Snow and holly overeating,*

 *It’s Christmas! Merry Christmas!*

 *It’s the best of holidays.*

 Christmas is a Christian holiday commemorating the birth of Jesus Christ. Americans celebrate Christmas on December the 25th . It is usually a one – day official holiday, but it is proceeded and followed by festive parties. By this day people decorate fir - trees with toys and candies. Children wait for Santa Claus who comes to every house and brings them presents. Before going to bed, children leave their shoes to find in them what they want most of all the next morning.

 Decorating the house with holly, ivy and mistletoe is a custom, which comes from England. Ivy means immortality. Holly is a bush with shiny red berries and glossy leaves with a characteristic shape and sharp pointy edges. Because it remains green throughout the year it was believed to hold a promise that the sun would return. Holly'’ berries symbolize Christ’s blood. Mistletoe is an interesting green parasitic plant which grows in globe – like formations high up in the branches of oak trees. Springs of it are tied together with ribbons and hung up in doorways. By custom anyone standing under the mistletoe gets to be kissed.

 Christmas is a family holiday. Schools and colleges close between Christmas and New Year’s Day. People stay at home and spend the time with their families. Everybody tries to come home for Christmas. People send cards or Christmas greetings to family and friends away from home. All the members of the family exchange gifts. It is a merry holiday.

Some holidays in America have their own symbols. Here they are:

1. Presidents Day 6. Independence Day
2. Columbus Day 7. New Year’s Day
3. St. Patrick’s Day 8. Martin Luther King’s day
4. Easter 9. Christmas
5. Valentine’s Day 10. Halloween

And there are festival post cards for every holiday, which American people give the friends and relatives when they congratulate each other. Here are some postcards for some parties:

Such are the US holidays. A holiday has simply become, for most Americans, a day off from work. No matter what the holiday’s origin is, they all seem to be the same thing, though some (for example, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Halloween) retain some individuality.

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