



# Mother's Day & Father's Day

MAY AND JUNE

**T**HIS READING INCLUDES a description of the two most celebrated family days: Mother's Day and Father's Day. Though National Grandparents' Day and International Children's Day also exist, they are not as widely celebrated in the United States as Mother's Day and Father's Day.

## Mother's Day

On the second Sunday in May, American children of all ages treat their mothers to something special. It is the day when children, young and old, try to show, in a **tangible** way, how much they appreciate their mothers, or those who have served as **mother figures** in their lives.

England was one of the first countries to set aside a day to recognize mothers. In the eighteenth century when many people worked as **household servants** for the rich, "Mothering Sunday" was reserved for them to return home to be with their mothers. Though this custom changed when the Industrial Revolution altered people's working and living patterns, mothers in England are still **honored** with a special day in March.

In the United States, the idea of Mother's Day was first introduced in 1872 by Julia Ward Howe, a famous writer and social **reformer** of the time. However, the establishment of an official day to honor mothers was due largely to the **perseverance** and love of one daughter, Anna Jarvis. Anna's mother had provided strength and sup-



PREVIOUS PAGE: On Mother's Day children of all ages make the day a special one for their mothers.  
ABOVE: Anna Marie Jarvis was successful in her efforts to set aside a day to honor mothers.

port as the family made their home in West Virginia and then Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where Anna's father served as a **minister**. As a girl, Anna had helped her mother take care of her garden, filled mostly with white carnations, her mother's favorite flower. When Mrs. Jarvis died on May 5, 1905, Anna was **determined** to honor her. She asked the minister at her former church in West Virginia to give a sermon in her mother's memory. On the same Sunday, their minister in Philadelphia also honored Mrs. Jarvis, and all mothers, with a special Mother's Day service. Anna Jarvis began writing to members of congress, asking them to set aside a day to honor mothers. In 1910, the governor of West Virginia proclaimed the second Sunday in May as Mother's Day. A year later, every state was celebrating it, and in 1914 President Woodrow Wilson declared the first national Mother's Day.

On Mother's Day morning, some American children follow the tradition of serving their mothers breakfast in bed. Other children will give their mothers gifts that they have made themselves or bought in stores. Adults also give their mothers cards, gifts, and flowers—often red carnations, the official Mother's Day flower. If their mothers are deceased, they may bring white carnations or other flowers to their **gravesites**. Mother's Day is the busiest day of the year for American restaurants. On her special day, family members do not want Mom to have to cook dinner!



## Father's Day

The United States is one of the few countries in the world that has an official day on which fathers are honored by their children. On the third Sunday in June, fathers, and all men who act as **father figures**, all across the United States are given presents, treated to dinner, or otherwise made to feel special.

The origin of Father's Day is not clear. Some say that it began with a church service in West Virginia in 1908. Others say the first Father's Day was held in Vancouver, Washington. Another story claims that the president of the Chicago Lions' Club, Harry Meek, celebrated the first Father's Day with his organization in 1915, choosing the third Sunday in June, the date closest to his birthday!

Regardless of when the first Father's Day occurred, the strongest **promoter** of the holiday was Sonora Smart Dodd of Spokane, Washington. She thought of the idea of a Father's Day while she was listening to a Mother's Day sermon. Mrs. Dodd felt that she had an **outstanding** father. He was a **veteran** of the Civil War. His wife had died young, and he had raised six children alone, without their mother. When Mrs. Dodd became an adult she recognized with great **appreciation** the **sacrifices** her father had made, and the remarkable job he had done as a **single parent**.

In 1909, Mrs. Dodd approached her **minister** and others in Spokane about having a church service dedicated to fathers on June 5, her father's birthday. That date was too soon for her minister to prepare the service, so he presented it a few weeks later on June 19th. From then on, the state of Washington celebrated the third Sunday in June as Father's Day. Children made special desserts, or visited their fathers if they lived apart.

States and organizations began lobbying Congress to declare an annual Father's Day. In 1916, President Woodrow Wilson approved of this idea, but it was not until 1924 that President Calvin

Coolidge made it a national event. He declared that the official recognition of Father's Day was to "establish more intimate relations between fathers and their children and to **impress upon** fathers the **full measure of their obligations**." Since then, fathers have been honored and recognized by their families throughout the country on the third Sunday in June. In 1966, President Lyndon Johnson signed a presidential **proclamation** making Father's Day a national **commemorative** day.

When children can't visit their fathers, they usually contact them by telephone or email, or they may send a greeting card. The cards might be traditional and **sentimental**, or **whimsical** so fathers laugh when they open them. Father's Day gifts may be store-bought or hand-made, and traditional gifts might include a tie, shirt, sports item, or a child's own drawing. Some children give their fathers **heartfelt** thanks for always **being** there when they needed "Dad."



### Glossary (Mother's Day)

**tangible:** *adj.* concrete; something which can be seen or held

**mother figure:** *n. phrase.* person who acts as a mother in a child's life such as a grandmother, stepmother, aunt, sister, good friend

**household:** *adj.* relating to the home

**honor(ed):** *v.* to remember with respect and thanks

**reformer:** *n.* person who works to bring about social change

**perseverance:** *n.* trying again and again without giving up

**minister:** *n.* the religious leader in a Protestant church

**determined:** *adj.* stubbornly certain of attaining a goal

**service:** *n.* a weekly or special religious ceremony generally held in a church or other place of worship

**proclaim(ed):** *v.* to officially name; to declare

**gravesite(s):** *n.* place where a person is buried

### Glossary (Father's Day)

**father figure(s):** *n. phrase.* person who acts as a father in a child's life



such as a grandfather, stepfather, uncle, brother, good friend

**treat(ed):** *v.* to give or provide without cost, such as a meal or entertainment

**Lions Club:** *n.* an international volunteer organization assisting those in need with such things as vision and health screening, supporting eye hospitals, and assisting youth

**promoter:** *n.* supporter

**sermon:** *n.* a speech delivered in public, usually by a religious leader as part of a religious gathering

**outstanding:** *adj.* very special; high quality; excellent

**veteran:** *n.* one who has been a member of the armed forces (army, navy, etc.)

**appreciation:** *n.* thankfulness

**sacrifice(s):** *n.* something given up in exchange for something else; e.g., to give up one's opportunity in order to help another person be successful

**single parent:** *n. phrase.* one parent

alone raising a child or children

**approach(ed):** *v.* present someone with an idea or proposal

**minister:** *n.* a clergy or religious leader, especially in the Protestant church

**dedicate(d):** *v.* to observe or have in honor of  
**lobby(ing):** *v.* to urge officials or members of Congress to vote a certain way on an issue

**impress upon:** *v. phrase.* to attempt to convince

**full measure:** *n. phrase.* complete, entire

**obligation(s):** *n.* responsibilities; duties

**proclamation:** *n.* an official public announcement

**commemorative:** *adj.* describing something done to remember a person or an event

**sentimental:** *adj.* especially emotional

**whimsical:** *adj.* funny in a light way

**heartfelt:** *adj.* sincere; from the heart

**being there:** *v. phrase.* being available, present, supportive

ABOVE: Mother's Day is a time for children to show how much they appreciate their mothers.

OPPOSITE PAGE: A family enjoys a picnic by a river.

