

Harvest

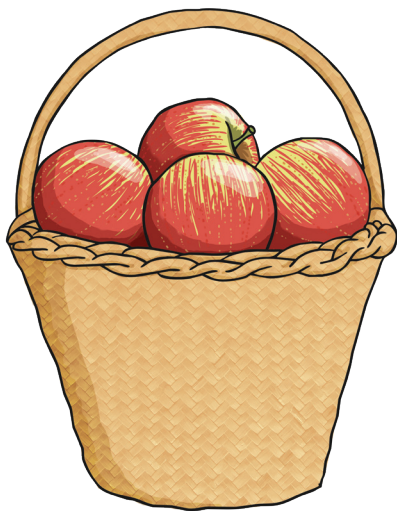
Harvest is the time of year where the food that has been growing over the summer months is gathered in as autumn arrives. It is a very old festival where people show that they are thankful for having food for the winter and celebrate the crops that have been gathered. Imagine the time before supermarkets could bring in food from miles away – you would definitely be thankful for a store of local crops!

When Is Harvest?

The word 'harvest' comes from an Old English word meaning 'autumn'. Harvest always follows the summer when the crops are ready to collect. In the UK, harvest celebrations mainly happen around the Harvest Moon, which can be any time from the end of September to the beginning of October

How Do People Celebrate?

Many schools, churches and groups have Harvest Festivals where food is brought and displayed. The food that is brought is often given as a gift to those in need and to support local homeless shelters or food banks. There are songs, readings and prayers of thanks at these celebrations.



Extract from the traditional song: John Barleycorn

They ploughed, they sowed,
they harrowed him in, threw clods upon his head,
And these three men made a solemn vow,
John Barleycorn was dead.

They let him lie for a very long time,
'til the rains from heaven did fall,
and little Sir John sprung up his head,
and so amazed them all.

They've let him stand 'til midsummer's day,
'til he looked both pale and wan,
And little Sir John's grown a long, long beard,
and so became a man.



Harvest Symbols and Characters

Harvest is all about growing and collecting food from the fields so wheat and bread are important harvest symbols, as well as English fruits, such as apples and berries.

In traditional folk songs, there is often a man called 'John Barleycorn'. He is another name for barley. In the songs, people assume he is dead as he is buried in the soil (just like when crop seeds are first planted), then he starts to grow like a child. After that, he becomes a man and gradually grows older with a beard made from the ears of barley. These songs were written and sung in praise of John Barleycorn before supermarkets, when local crops were so important to make bread and drinks.

Pagans believed that the spirit of the corn lived in the crop so when all of the corn had been harvested, the spirit would be homeless. To prevent this, the last sheaf of corn of the harvest would be made into a 'corn dolly'. These were plaited lengths of corn that could be many different designs and patterns. Some believed the corn spirit would live in the corn dolly while others believed it would be reborn into it. Either way, the corn dolly spent the winter in the farmer's home and was believed to bring good luck for the next harvest.



Questions

1. Why was harvest celebrated in history?

2. What does the word 'harvest' mean in Old English? Tick one.

- summer
- food
- farming
- autumn

3. Draw **four** lines to match the line in the John Barleycorn song to its meaning.

"little Sir John sprung up
his head"

The plant was left to grow
taller.

"they've let him stand 'til
midsummer's day"

The seeds were planted.

"and so became a man"

The barley was fully
grown.

"they ploughed they
sowed"

The seeds started to grow.

4. Fill in the missing words.

In the UK, harvest celebrations mainly happen around the _____, _____, which can be any time from the end of September to the beginning of October.

5. Name **two** places that the food given in a Harvest Festival might go to.

6. Why do you think food is given to those in need during harvest celebrations today?

7. Why do you think people today might be less thankful for the food they get from the harvest than in the past and why harvest is not such a big celebration anymore?

8. Why do you think that bananas are not traditional symbols of harvest in the UK?

Answers

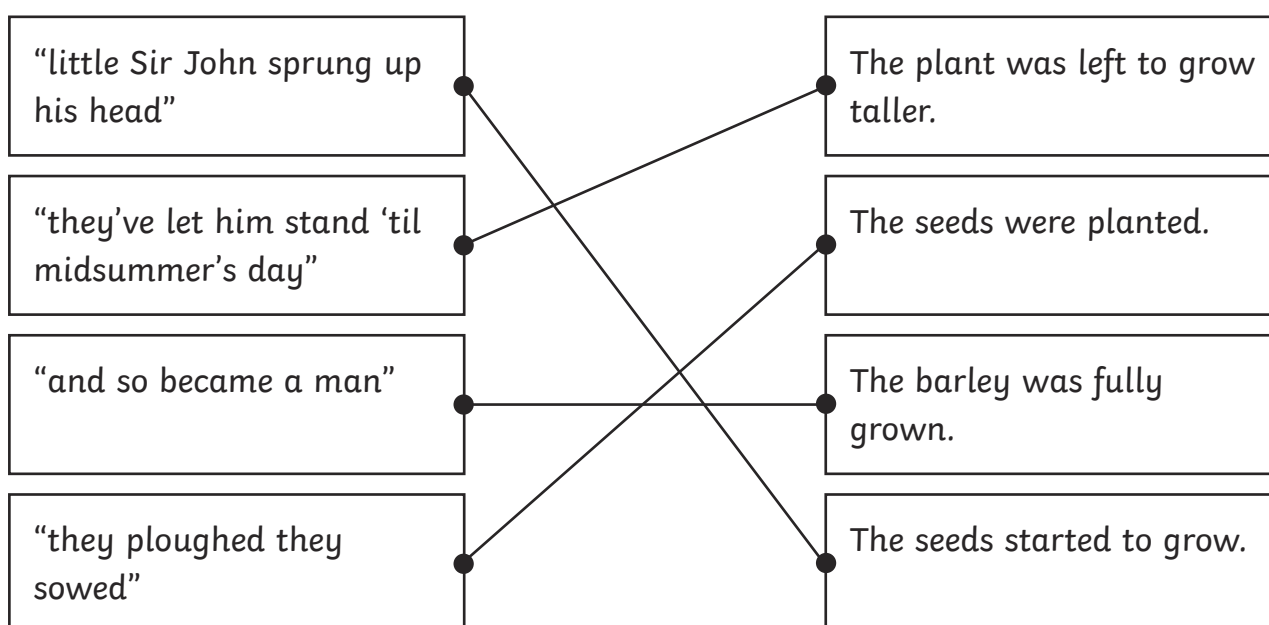
1. Why was harvest celebrated in history?

Harvest was celebrated to be thankful for the crops that had grown in the summer that would feed people through winter.

2. What does the word 'harvest' mean in Old English? Tick one.

- summer
- food
- farming
- autumn**

3. Draw **four** lines to match the line in the John Barleycorn song to its meaning.



4. Fill in the missing words.

In the UK, harvest celebrations mainly happen around the **Harvest Moon**, which can be any time from the end of September to the beginning of October.

5. Name **two** places that the food given in a Harvest Festival might go to.

homeless shelters

food banks

6. Why do you think food is given to those in need during harvest celebrations today?

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think food is given to those in need during harvest celebrations today because they may find it tricky to have a good store of food ready for winter for lots of reasons. In the past, the festival was held to be thankful for having enough food to last the winter and those in need today will be the most thankful for it.

7. Why do you think people today might be less thankful for the food they get from the harvest than in the past and why harvest is not such a big celebration anymore?

Pupils' own responses, that refer to food being more readily available, such as: People might be less thankful today because food is available in large quantities all year round from supermarkets so people are less reliant on one local harvest (even though all the supermarket food is still reliant on harvests).

8. Why do you think that bananas are not traditional symbols of harvest in the UK?

Pupils' own responses, such as: Bananas are not a traditional harvest symbol in the UK as they are not grown there. Traditional symbols include wheat, bread and English fruits, such as apples and berries.

Harvest

Harvest is the time of year where the food that has been growing over the summer months is gathered as autumn arrives and the food is ready. People have celebrated this time for hundreds of years as they are thankful to have food for the winter ahead. Imagine the time before supermarkets could buy in food from miles away – you would definitely be grateful for a store of local crops!

When Is Harvest?

The word 'harvest' comes from an Old English word 'hærfest' (pronounced h-er-fest or h-ayr-fest) meaning 'autumn'. Depending on where you are in the world, harvest will follow the summer, although some people celebrate the harvest season differently. In the UK, harvest celebrations mainly fall around the Harvest Moon, which is the full moon nearest to the Autumn Equinox (around 22nd September). Others celebrate the first harvest from 1st August to 1st September in the ancient festival, Lammas.

How Do People Celebrate?

Many schools, churches and groups have Harvest Festivals where food is brought and displayed. The food that is brought is often gifted to those in need, such as the elderly or people in need of food and support, like homeless shelters and food banks. There are often songs, readings and prayers of thanks at the celebrations.



Extract from the traditional song: John Barleycorn

They ploughed, they sowed,
they harrowed him in, threw clods upon his head,
And these three men made a solemn vow,
John Barleycorn was dead.

They let him lie for a very long time,
'til the rains from heaven did fall,
and little Sir John sprung up his head,
and so amazed them all.

They've let him stand 'til midsummer's day,
'til he looked both pale and wan,
And little Sir John's grown a long, long beard,
and so became a man.

Harvest Symbols and Characters.

Harvest is all about growing and collecting food from the fields so wheat, corn and bread are important harvest symbols, as well as English fruits, such as apples and berries.



In traditional harvest folk songs, there is often the character of 'John Barleycorn'. He plays the role of barley and he is a symbol of the crop's lifecycle. In the songs, people assume he is dead because he is buried in the soil (when the seeds are planted). Soon, he starts to grow like a child and then he becomes a man before growing older with a beard made of the ears of barley. These songs were written and sung in praise of John Barleycorn when local crops were so important to make bread and drinks. It is believed by some that John Barleycorn has his origins way back in Anglo-Saxon times.

In Pagan times, people believed that the spirit of the corn lived in the crop so when all of the corn had been harvested, the spirit would be homeless. To prevent this, the last sheaf of the harvest would be made into a 'corn dolly'. These were plaited lengths of corn that could be many different designs and patterns. They often didn't resemble dolls at all! Some believed the corn spirit would live in the corn dolly while others believed it would be reborn into it. Either way, the corn dolly was believed to bring good luck for the next harvest. As such, it had place of honour at the harvest feast and spent the winter in the farmer's home.



Questions

1. What is harvest?

2. Where does the word harvest come from?

3. Explain, in your own words, how the date of the Harvest Festival will change every year in the UK.

4. Find and copy **three** different places where food gathered in a Harvest Festival might be donated to.

5. Read the John Barleycorn song and number these events in order of what is actually happening. The first one has been done for you.

| Event | Number Order |
|------------------------------------|--------------|
| The plant was left to grow taller. | |
| The seeds were planted. | 1 |
| The barley was fully grown. | |
| The seeds started to grow. | |

6. In Pagan times, where would you find a corn dolly in winter? Tick one.

- out in the fields
 in the supermarket
 in the farmer's home
 on the farmer's front door

7. Why do you think people wrote songs in praise of John Barleycorn?

8. Why do you think people today might be less thankful for the food they get from the harvest than in the past and why harvest is not such a big celebration anymore?

9. Summarise what a Harvest Festival is in 30 words or fewer.

Answers

1. What is harvest?

Harvest is the time of year when food is gathered after it has grown over the summer.

2. Where does the word harvest come from?

The word 'harvest' comes from the Old English word 'hærfest', which means 'autumn'.

3. Explain, in your own words, how the date of the Harvest Festival will change every year in the UK.

Pupils' own responses, such as: In the UK, harvest celebrations are decided by the timing of the Harvest Moon (the nearest full moon to the autumn equinox).

4. Find and copy **three** different places where food gathered in a Harvest Festival might be donated to.

homeless shelters

food banks

elderly care homes

5. Read the John Barleycorn song and number these events in order of what is actually happening. The first one has been done for you.

| Event | Number Order |
|------------------------------------|--------------|
| The plant was left to grow taller. | 3 |
| The seeds were planted. | 1 |
| The barley was fully grown. | 4 |
| The seeds started to grow. | 2 |

6. In Pagan times, where would you find a corn dolly in winter? Tick one.

- out in the fields
- in the supermarket
- in the farmer's home**
- on the farmer's front door

7. Why do you think people wrote songs in praise of John Barleycorn?

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think that people wrote songs of praise for crops because they relied on the farmer's crops. They were the only way that people would be able to get their food. If there was not a good harvest, people could not just go to the supermarket to get more food like today.

8. Why do you think people today might be less thankful for the food they get from the harvest than in the past and why harvest is not such a big celebration anymore?

Pupils' own responses, that refer to food being more readily available, such as: People might be less thankful today because food is available in large quantities all year round from supermarkets so people are less reliant on one local harvest (even though all the supermarket food is still reliant on harvests).

9. Summarise what a Harvest Festival is in 30 words or fewer.

Pupils' own responses, such as: The Harvest Festival is a celebration that gives thanks for the year's crops that have grown and have been harvested. In the past, this would allow people to survive the winter.

Harvest

Harvest is the time of year where the food that has been growing over the summer months is gathered as autumn draws in. People have celebrated this time for hundreds of years as they are thankful to have food for the approaching winter. Imagine the times before supermarkets could import crops from miles away – you would definitely be thankful for a good local harvest.

When Is Harvest?

The word 'harvest' comes from an Old English word 'hærfest' (pronounced 'h-eer-fest' or 'h-ayr-fest') which means 'autumn'. Depending on where you are in the world, harvest will follow the crop's growing season but in the UK it centres around the Harvest Moon, which is the full moon nearest to the Autumn Equinox (around 22nd September). This moon occurs mostly in late September but sometimes occurs in early October. Some people also celebrate the very first harvests from the 1st of August to 1st September in an ancient festival called Lammas, meaning 'loaf mass'.

How Do People Celebrate?

Many schools, churches and groups have Harvest Festivals where food is brought and displayed. Mostly, the food that is brought is taken and distributed to those in need, such as the elderly or people in refuges. Often, there are songs, readings and prayers of thanks shared at these celebrations.



Extract from the traditional song:

John Barleycorn

There were three men came out of the west,
their fortunes for to try,
and these three men made a solemn vow,
John Barleycorn must die.

They ploughed, they sowed,
they harrowed him in, threw clods upon his head,
And these three men made a solemn vow,
John Barleycorn was dead.

They let him lie for a very long time,
'til the rains from heaven did fall,
and little Sir John sprung up his head,
and so amazed them all.

They've let him stand 'til midsummer's day,
'til he looked both pale and wan,
And little Sir John's grown a long, long beard,
and so became a man.

Harvest Symbols and Characters.

Due to the fact that harvest is all about growing and gathering food from the fields, harvest symbols generally include wheat and corn, as well as English fruits, such as apples and berries.



In traditional harvest folk songs, there is often found the character of 'John Barleycorn'; he personifies the life cycle of barley. In the song, John begins life as a child, growing and becoming a man, before being chopped down. This shows the life cycle of arable crops, including corn, wheat and barley. Songs were sung in praise of John Barleycorn when local, arable crops were a real lifeline providing bread and drinks. It is believed by some that John Barleycorn has his origins or links with an Anglo-Saxon character called Beowa, coming from the Old English word 'beow', meaning barley.

In Pagan times, people believed that the spirit of the corn lived in the crop so when all of the corn had been harvested, the spirit would be homeless. To prevent this, the last sheaf of the harvest would be made into a 'corn dolly'. These were plaited lengths of corn that could be many different designs and patterns. They often didn't resemble dolls at all! Some believed the corn spirit would live in the corn dolly while others believed it would be reborn into it. Either way, the corn dolly was believed to bring good luck for the next harvest. As such, it had place of honour at the harvest feast and spent the winter in the farmer's home. Other harvest traditions included ringing the church bells on every day of harvest. When harvest was over, and the final cartload would be brought to storage, the horse pulling the cart would be decorated with flowers and colourful ribbons. There would also be a huge feast at the farmer's house, where games would be played.



Questions

1. What is the name of the ancient harvest celebration? What does this word mean?

2. What could be made from arable crops? Tick **two**.

cheese

bread

drinks

stew

3. Harvest always falls on the same day every year...

Is this true or untrue? Explain your answer using evidence from the text.

4. Why do you think in modern Harvest Festivals, food is given to those in need?

5. What is a corn dolly?

6. Number these events in order of what is actually happening in the John Barleycorn song.

The first one has been done for you.

| Event | Number Order |
|----------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| The plant was left to grow taller. | |
| The seeds were planted. | 1 |
| The head/ears of barley appear on the tall plants. | |
| A midsummer's day arrived. | |
| The seeds started to grow. | |

7. Why aren't bananas traditional symbols of harvest in the UK?

8. Why do you think people wrote songs in praise of John Barleycorn and arable crops?

9. Fill in the missing words.

It is believed by some that John Barleycorn has his origins or links with an _____ character called Beowa, coming from the Old English word '_____', meaning barley.

10. Why do you think people today might be less thankful for the food they get from the harvest than in the past and why harvest is not such a big celebration anymore?

Answers

1. What is the name of the ancient harvest celebration? What does this word mean?

Lammas is the ancient harvest celebration, meaning 'loaf mass'.

2. What could be made from arable crops? Tick **two**.

- cheese
- bread**
- drinks**
- stew

3. **Harvest always falls on the same day every year...**

Is this true or untrue? Explain your answer using evidence from the text.

Pupils' own responses, such as: This is untrue, as harvest falls on different dates near the autumn equinox. This is because it is based on when the full moon falls and full moons fall on different dates each year (due to their 28-day cycle).

4. Why do you think in modern Harvest Festivals, food is given to those in need?

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think food is given to those in need during harvest celebrations today because they may find it tricky to have a good store of food ready for winter for lots of reasons. In the past, the festival was held to be thankful for having enough food to last the winter and those in need today will be the most thankful for it.

5. What is a corn dolly?

A corn dolly was made from the last sheaf of the harvest and Pagans believed the corn spirit lived inside it.

6. Number these events in order of what is actually happening in the John Barleycorn song.

The first one has been done for you.

| Event | Number Order |
|----------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| The plant was left to grow taller. | 3 |
| The seeds were planted. | 1 |
| The head/ears of barley appear on the tall plants. | 5 |
| A midsummer's day arrived. | 4 |
| The seeds started to grow. | 2 |

7. Why aren't bananas traditional symbols of harvest in the UK?

Pupils' own responses, such as: Bananas are not a traditional harvest symbol in the UK as they are not grown there. Traditional symbols include wheat, bread and English fruits, such as apples and berries.

8. Why do you think people wrote songs in praise of John Barleycorn and arable crops?

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think that people wrote songs of praise for crops because they relied on the farmer's crops. They were the only way that people would be able to get their food. If there was not a good harvest, people could not just go to the supermarket to get more food like today.

9. Fill in the missing words.

It is believed by some that John Barleycorn has his origins or links with an **Anglo-Saxon** character called Beowa, coming from the Old English word '**beow**', meaning barley.

10. Why do you think people today might be less thankful for the food they get from the harvest than in the past and why harvest is not such a big celebration anymore?

Pupils' own responses, that refer to food being more readily available, such as: People might be less thankful today because food is available in large quantities all year round from supermarkets so people are less reliant on one local harvest (even though all the supermarket food is still reliant on harvests).