

Mother's Day

Many people say that Mother's Day was invented by store keepers to warm up business in a time when not many people shop. But this isn't quite true. People in many ancient cultures celebrated holidays honouring motherhood, personified as a goddess.

One of the earliest historical records of a society celebrating a Mother deity can be found among the ancient Egyptians, who held an annual festival to honour the goddess Isis, who was commonly regarded as the Mother of the pharaohs.

The ancient Greeks celebrated a holiday in honour of Rhea, the mother of the gods

The ancient Romans celebrated a holiday in honour of Cybele, a mother goddess.

In the British Isles and Celtic Europe, the goddess Brigid, and later her successor St. Brigid, were honoured with a spring Mother's Day.



The early Christians in England celebrated the Mother's festival on the fourth Sunday of Lent (the 40-day period leading up to Easter) to honour Mary, the mother of Christ. In the 17th century a religious order stretched the holiday to include all mothers, and named it as the Mothering Sunday. This holiday was meant to reunify mothers and their children, separated when working class families had to send off their young children to be employed as house servants. On Mothering Sunday, the child servants were allowed to return home for the day to visit with their parents. Small gifts were given, and a special dessert called a simnel cake was served.



The holiday's popularity faded in the 19th century, only to be reincarnated during World War II when U.S. servicemen reintroduced the sentimental (and commercial) aspects of the celebration American counterpart.

In 1858, Anna Reeves Jarvis was the first woman to hold an official celebration of mothers, when in her home state of West Virginia, she instituted Mothers' Work Day.

Then in 1905, Anna Reeves Jarvis died and her daughter, Anna Jarvis, took up her mother's torch. Anna swore on her mother's gravesite that she would realize her lifelong dream of creating a national day to honour mothers. Carnations were her mother's favourite flower and Anna felt that they symbolized a mother's pure love. In 1908, her mother's church held a special Sunday service in honour of mothers - a tradition that spread the very next year to churches in 46 states. In 1909, Anna left her job and dedicated herself to a full-time letter-writing campaign, imploring politicians, clergymen and civic leaders to institute a national day for mothers.

In 1912, Jarvis' efforts met with success: Her home state of West Virginia adopted an official Mother's Day; two years later, the U.S. Congress passed a Joint Resolution, signed by President Wilson, establishing a national Mother's Day emphasizing the role of women in their families - and not, like Julia Ward Howe's campaign, in the public arena. Ever since, Mother's Day has been celebrated by Americans on the second Sunday in May.

Answer the questions about the text

Which is the earliest record of celebrating motherhood?

Who was Isis and what did she represent?

What was the Mothering Sunday about?

What was served that day?

What other celebration is similar to Mothering Sunday?

Who is "the mother" of modern Mother's Day?

Why did Anna Reeves send Carnations to the church?

Why did Anna Reeves quit her job?

When was Mother's Day made official in the USA?

Answer the questions about you

Do you celebrate (did you celebrate) Mother's Day?

How do you celebrate it?

Do you buy a present?

Do you do the home chores that day?

Do you think it's important to celebrate Mother's Day or do you think it's only a commercial thing?