

# 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. There are songs, readings and prayers of thanks at these celebrations.

## 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.



## 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.



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.



# Questions

1. In which two months could Harvest Festival happen in the UK?

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2. In the text, the author uses the word 'thankful'. Which of these words means the opposite of 'thankful'?

Tick One	
nonthankful	
unthankful	
antithankful	
misthankful	

3. In the UK, how is the date of harvest celebrations decided?

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4. Tick all the places that harvest food might be given after a harvest festival:

Tick all that apply	
Shops	
A homeless shelter	
A farm	
A foodbank	

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

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6. Read the John Barleycorn song and match up the line with the real meaning:

Song line
Little Sir John sprung up his head
They've let him stand 'til Midsummer's Day
and so became a man
They ploughed they sowed

Real Meaning
The plant was left to grow taller.
The seeds were planted.
The barley was fully grown.
The seeds started to grow.

7. Name one thing made from crops like barley in the olden days.

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8. Why do you think people today might be less thankful for the food they get from the harvest and harvest is not a huge celebration anymore?

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# Answers

1. In which two months could Harvest Festival happen in the UK?

**Harvest festival could happen in the UK in September or October.**

2. In the text, the author uses the word 'thankful'. Which of these words means the opposite of 'thankful'?

Tick One	
nonthankful	
unthankful	✓
antithankful	
misthankful	

3. In the UK, how is the date of harvest celebrations decided?

**In the UK, harvest celebrations are decided by the timing of the Harvest Moon (the nearest full moon to the Autumn Equinox).**

4. Tick all the places that harvest food might be given after a harvest festival:

Tick all that apply	
Shops	
A homeless shelter	✓
A farm	
A foodbank	✓

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

**Bananas are not a traditional harvest symbol in the UK as they are not grown here.**

**Traditional symbols include wheat, bread and English fruits such as apples and berries.**

6. Read the John Barleycorn song and match up the line with the real meaning:

Song line	Real 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.

7. Name one thing made from crops like barley in the olden days.

**Bread and drinks were made from crops.**

8. Why do you think people today might be less thankful for the food they get from the harvest and harvest is not a huge celebration anymore?

**Children's answers may vary but must refer to the fact that food is more readily available. 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).**

# 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. 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, 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.



# Questions

1. Which two seasons are not mentioned in the text?

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2. In the text, the author uses the word 'grateful'. Which of these words means the opposite of 'grateful'?

Tick One	
nongrateful	
ungrateful	
antigrateful	
misgrateful	

3. What does the word 'harvest' mean?

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4. In the UK, how is the date of harvest celebrations decided?

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5. Tick all the places that harvest food might be donated after a harvest festival:

Tick all that apply	
Shops	
Elderly care homes	
Bakers	
Homeless shelter	
Foodbanks	

6. Why aren't bananas traditional symbols of harvest?

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7. Read the John Barleycorn song and number these events in order of what is actually happening:

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

8. Why do you think people today might be less thankful for the food they get from the harvest and harvest is not a huge celebration anymore?

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9. Summarise what harvest festival is and include as much detail as possible.

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# Answers

1. Which two seasons are not mentioned in the text?

**Spring and winter are not mentioned in the text.**

2. In the text, the author uses the word 'grateful'. Which of these words means the opposite of 'grateful'?

Tick One	
nongrateful	
ungrateful	✓
antigrateful	
misgrateful	

3. What does the word 'harvest' mean?

**The word harvest comes from an Old English word 'hærfest' meaning 'autumn'.**

4. In the UK, how is the date of harvest celebrations decided?

**In the UK, harvest celebrations are decided by the timing of the Harvest Moon (the nearest full moon to the Autumn Equinox).**

5. Tick all the places that harvest food might be donated after a harvest festival:

Tick all that apply	
Shops	
Elderly care homes	✓
Bakers	
Homeless shelter	✓
Foodbanks	✓

6. Why aren't bananas traditional symbols of harvest?

**Bananas are not a traditional harvest symbol in the UK as they are not grown here.**

**Traditional symbols include wheat, bread and English fruits such as apples and berries.**

7. Read the John Barleycorn song and number these events in order of what is actually happening:

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

8. Why do you think people today might be less thankful for the food they get from the harvest and harvest is not a huge celebration anymore?

**Children's answers may vary but must refer to the fact that food is more readily available. 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 harvest festival is and include as much detail as possible.

**Children's answers will vary. Children should detail key facts based on the texts such as what harvest means, when it is, what people do to celebrate, etc.**

# 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.

# Questions

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

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2. Why is harvest celebrated in Australia at a different time to the UK?

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3. Why is harvest celebrated on different dates each year in the UK?

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4. What was happening in the fields when the three men were 'amazed' in the John Barleycorn song?

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

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

6. Who do you think the 'three men' are in the John Barleycorn song?

Give a reason for your answer.

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7. In the song, the men made a 'solemn vow'. Define solemn

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

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9. Why do you think people today might be less thankful for the food they get from the harvest? Why might harvest not be a huge celebration anymore?

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10. Summarise, in as much detail as possible, what the harvest festival is.

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# Answers

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

**Lammas is the ancient harvest celebration and it means 'loaf mass'.**

2. Why is harvest celebrated in Australia at a different time to the UK?

**In Australia the seasons are different as they are in the southern hemisphere so harvest will not be at the same time as in the UK.**

3. Why is harvest celebrated on different dates each year in the UK?

**Harvest will fall on different dates near the Autumn Equinox 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. What was happening in the fields when the three men were 'amazed' in the John Barleycorn song?

**In the song, the men were amazed when the barley started to grow through the soil (after they thought they had buried it).**

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

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

6. Who do you think the 'three men' are in the John Barleycorn song?

Give a reason for your answer.

**Children's answers will vary but must draw links between the men and farmworkers.**

**The three men must be farmers as they are sowing the seed and ploughing.**

7. In the song, the men made a 'solemn vow'. Define solemn.

**Solemn means serious or with sincerity.**

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

**I think that people wrote songs of praise for crops because they relied on the farmer's crops because 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.**

9. Why do you think people today might be less thankful for the food they get from the harvest? Why might harvest not be a huge celebration anymore?

**Children's answers may vary but must refer to the fact that food is more readily available. 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).**

10. Summarise, in as much detail as possible, what the harvest festival is.

**Children's answers will vary. Children should detail key facts based on the texts such as what harvest means, when it is, what people do to celebrate, etc.**