

Father's Day

On 5th July 1908, a church in West Virginia sponsored the first event in honour of fathers. It was a Sunday sermon in memory of 362 men who had died the previous December in an explosion at the Fairmont Coal Company mines in Monongah. Many of the men who died were fathers and grandfathers.

A year later, an ambitious young woman called Sonora Smart Dodd decided to try to organise an official day to honour all fathers. She was one of six children who had all been raised by their single father. She went to churches, the YMCA, shopkeepers and the government, to try to get support. She was successful!

Sonora originally wanted the day to be celebrated on her father's birthday – 5th June, but there wasn't time to arrange it properly, so the 19th June 1910 was chosen instead. Sonora spent the day delivering Father's Day gifts to all fathers in the city that were too ill to leave their homes.

At first, Father's Day was not thought to be as important as Mother's Day, and was actually considered a bit of a joke, and just an excuse to sell things in shops.

However, Sonora was outraged and said:

“Either we honour both of our parents, mother and father, or let us desist from honouring either one. But to single out just one of our two parents and omit the other is the most grievous insult imaginable.”

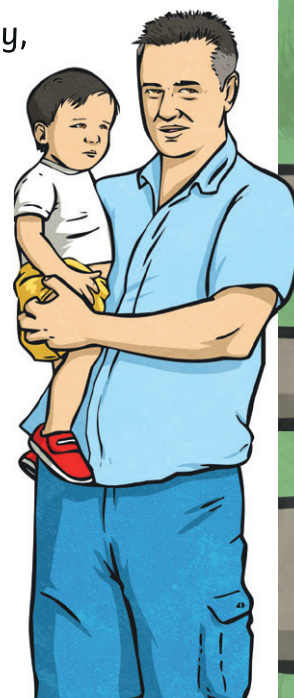
Finally, in 1972, President Richard Nixon made Father's Day an official national holiday, and issued a statement that it be “an occasion for renewal of the love and gratitude we bear to our fathers.”

There are no set traditions on how people celebrate Father's Day, but it is a great time to appreciate any man who plays the role of a father, whether they be a grandfather, uncle or other member of the family who has looked after us.

Did you know?

In the UK, Father's Day is celebrated each year on the third Sunday of June.

Often fathers are given cards and gifts on Father's Day, typically socks and ties, or sports and electronic equipment. All fathers are different and will be grateful for a special card, gift or act of kindness that is personal to them. A homemade card is always a good option, or breakfast in bed.



Questions about Father's Day

Answer the questions below in full sentences.

1. What happened on the 5th July 1908 in West Virginia and why?

2. Why do you think Sonora Smart Dodd was so determined to have a national day just for fathers?

3. What word tells us how angry she was that there wasn't a special day for honouring fathers?

4. What does "desist from honouring either one" mean?

5. How could you work out the date of Father's Day next year?

6. What did Nixon want Father's Day to be about?

7. Apart from fathers, who else can be celebrated on this day?

8. What is a 'tradition'?

9. How will you celebrate Father's Day?

Questions about Father's Day

Answers

1. What happened on the 5th July 1908 in West Virginia and why?
The first sponsored event to honour fathers took place because 362 men had died the year before in a mining explosion.
2. Why do you think Sonora Smart Dodd was so determined to have a national day just for fathers?
Because her father had raised her and her 5 siblings all on his own, and she felt that fathers should be honoured as well as mothers.
3. What word tells us how angry she was that there wasn't a special day for honouring fathers?
Outraged.
4. What does "desist from honouring either one" mean?
That people should stop appreciating mothers if they weren't going to honour fathers too.
5. How could you work out the date of Father's Day next year?
It is on the third Sunday of June each year.
6. What did Nixon want Father's Day to be about?
Renewing the love and gratitude for our fathers.
7. Apart from fathers, who else can be celebrated on this day?
Grandfathers and uncles; any men who are like a father to people.
8. What is a 'tradition'?
A set of customs that is passed on from generation to generation.
9. How will you celebrate Father's Day?
Pupil's own response.