

Informational Text Pack for January

Peanuts and Peanut Butter

Featuring. . .

January 24th:
National Peanut Butter Day in the U.S.A.
and
How the *Peanuts* Gang Got Its Name



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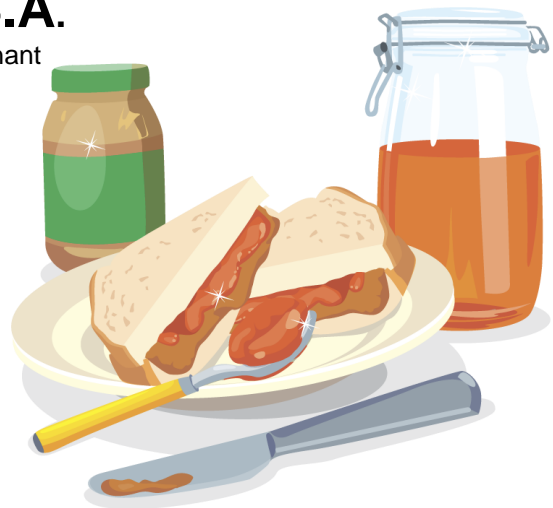
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January 24th : National Peanut Butter Day in the U.S.A.

by Margaret Whisnant

Peanut butter is a food chameleon. Its distinctive aroma and flavor blend into dozens of edible concoctions. It can be its real self in a sandwich or take on the appearance of a cookie, a pie, or a scoop of ice cream. It hides out in candy under a chocolate camouflage. Even its name is a disguise.



To begin with, there is no butter in peanut butter. A mixture of vegetable oils gives it spreadability. Furthermore, a peanut is not a nut. It's a legume, a member of the pea and bean family that forms pods with seeds inside. Peanuts are unique because their pods grow underground. After harvest, they dry into the familiar shells that we crack open. What's inside can certainly be called a pea, although it's actually a seed.

None of these little errors seem to matter. By the time an average American youngster graduates from high school, he/she will have gobbled down 1,500 or so peanut butter and jelly (PB&J) sandwiches. Americans consume about 3 pounds of peanut butter per person per year—a composite total of 800 million pounds, give or take an ounce or two.

American farmers grow tons of peanuts in eight Southern states to meet our peanut butter cravings, but the plant is actually native to South America. Most scientists think it originated in Brazil or Peru. The ancient Incas are believed to have cultivated peanuts as early as 1500 B.C.E., and they are the first known people to grind them into a paste-like substance. Early European explorers introduced peanuts to the rest of the world, and the lumpy mixtures people made from them continued to be consumed as food over the next 19 centuries.

This article is two full pages. . .

Questions

for

January 24th : National Peanut Butter Day in the U.S.A.

by Margaret Whisnant

Instructions: Refer to **January 24th: National Peanut Butter Day in the U.S.A.** to answer the following questions. Write your responses in the spaces provided.

- _____ 1. The main idea of this text is
- (A) why we celebrate National Peanut Butter Day.
 - (B) how modern peanut butter was developed.
 - (C) why Americans love peanut butter.
 - (D) who makes the most popular peanut butter and peanut butter products.
- _____ 2. How does paragraph 5 (the last paragraph on page 1) contribute to the text's main theme?
- (A) It addresses the mystery of who invented the first mix that became modern peanut butter.
 - (B) It identifies the fist mix that became modern peanut butter.
 - (C) It explains why Dr. John Harvey Kellogg patented a "Process of Preparing Nut Meal."
 - (D) It gives the reader an idea of the importance of peanut butter.

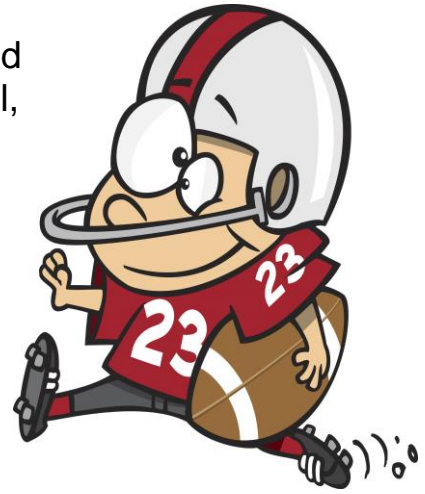
3. What facts support the author's metaphor that peanut butter is a food chameleon?

Full file has 15 CCSS aligned questions for his article.

How the *Peanuts* Gang Got Its Name

by Margaret Whisnant

Who could imagine *Charlie Brown*, *Lucy*, *Snoopy* and the rest as anything other than the *Peanuts* gang? Well, their creator, Charles Schulz, for one. He was not happy that they got stuck with a name like *Peanuts*. It was not his first choice.



Schulz introduced his cast of comic strip juveniles to the world as *Li'l Folks*. From 1947 to 1950 they made a weekly appearance in his hometown paper, the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, but they weren't very popular. In early 1950, the paper dropped the strip, prompting Schulz to take his best *Li'l Folks* samples to the United Feature Syndicate, a company that provided comics to numerous newspapers all over the country. They liked *Li'l Folks* and decided to run it, but they had a problem with the name. It was too much like two other comics of the time—Al Capp's *Li'l Abner* and a strip called *Little Folks*. In order to avoid confusion and legal entanglements, *Li'l Folks* would need a new name. A phrase from the days of vaudeville and a kid's TV show provided the inspiration.

From the early 1800s to the late 1930s, vaudeville was a popular form of entertainment in the United States and Canada. A variety of acts—singers, dancers, actors, jugglers, comedians, ventriloquists, etc.—joined forces and traveled from town to town to perform live at local theaters. In each one, there was an audience seating area in the rear or in the balcony that was less desirable and less expensive than the rest. Of course, the poorest people bought these seats. Peanuts were usually the cheapest snacks, and they bought those, too. The cheap-seat people were often snubbed as less important than other patrons, but that didn't stop them from expressing their opinions. If they didn't like an act, they heckled the performers with rude comments. They also hurled peanuts onto the stage. And so, this part of the audience became known as "the peanut gallery." However, the unfavorable phrase took on a new meaning soon after vaudeville gave way to TV.

This article is two full pages.

Questions

for

How the *Peanuts* Gang Got Its Name

by Margaret Whisnant

Instructions: Refer to *How the Peanuts Gang Got Its Name* to answer the following questions. Write your responses in the spaces provided.

- _____ 1. The original name Charles Schulz gave to his comic strip was
- (A) *Li'l Folks*.
 - (B) *Li'l Abner*
 - (C) *Little Folks*
 - (D) *The Peanut Gang*
- _____ 2. Based on the information included in the second paragraph, an observant reader can infer that Charles Schulz
- (A) was a superior artist.
 - (B) was from Minnesota.
 - (C) knew a lot about kids.
 - (D) was a persuasive salesman.
3. Write one sentence that summarizes the problem United Feature Syndicate had with Schulz's original title.
-
-
-
-
- _____ 4. Which of the following is **not** a true fact about vaudeville?
- (A) It was a form of entertainment in the U.S. and Canada from the early 1800s to the late 1930s.
 - (B) Shows were performed live in different theaters
 - (C) A vaudeville show presented only one type of entertainment, such as dancers.
 - (D) A variety of entertainers traveled together from town to town to perform at local theaters.

Complete product has 15 CCSS aligned questions for this article.

Full answer keys for both articles included with designated CCSS alignment(s) for each question.

Note to Teachers About. . .

Peanut and Peanut Butter Facts

People, Places, and Things

The following two pages are filled with facts about peanuts (the legume, not the comic strip) and peanut butter that didn't fit in the National Peanut Butter Day article but were just too interesting to ignore. I am adding them to this pack as a resource for further writing and learning.

For example, have students look at a particular fact or group of facts and explain why the information does not fit into the focus of the National Peanut Butter Day text. Another idea is to challenge your students to choose a collection of three or more facts and figure out a way to add it to the article so that it expands the theme but does not get off topic. For your super thinkers, assign them the task of starting with my first paragraph, change the last sentence (which leads into the definition of peanut butter), and take the next paragraph to a new focus.

Of course, the lists are great starting points for students to write their own informational texts—either as a single paragraph or as a full article. I have categorized the items as People, Places, or Things to help with organization. However, students can pick and choose from all three lists or create new categories.

I have included my e-bibliography both as a reference and as a beginning point for further research when students find they have additional questions about some of the facts.

This list would also be an excellent resource for creating a set (or several sets) of Informational text task cards.

These are only a few of the possibilities. I'm confident that you and your students will identify many more . . .



Margaret Whisnant

Sample facts . . .

Peanut and Peanut Butter Facts

People, Places, and Things

People

- U. S. Presidents Jimmy Carter and Thomas Jefferson were peanut farmers
- Baseball Hall of Fame members Jim “Catfish” Hunter and Gaylord Perry are peanut farmers from North Carolina.
- Elvis Presley’s favorite sandwich was peanut butter and bananas grilled in butter. Sometimes he added bacon.
- Former President Bill Clinton also likes peanut butter and banana sandwiches.
- Author Ernest Hemingway is said to have added thick onion slices to his peanut butter sandwiches.

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