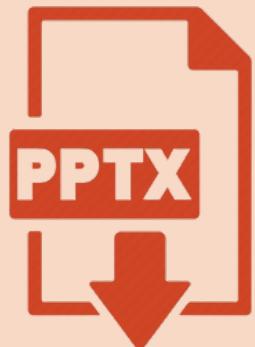


# HAPPY CHUSEOK

Korea's Harvest Holiday  
ELT Buzz Teaching Resources

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# Chuseok (추석)

Chuseok is the biggest and most important holiday in Korea. It is a time when family members from near and far come together to share food, tell stories, and give thanks to their ancestors for the good harvest.



Chuseok traditions go back to ancient beliefs about the moon, the full moon only came once a month so it was thought to be a special and meaningful event.

On the morning of Chuseok Day, food is set out to give thanks to ancestors. Songpyeon is one of the famous foods of Chuseok. This rice cake is prepared with rice powder and is squeezed into the size of a golf ball, and then filled with sesame seed, beans, red beans, chestnuts, or other tasty ingredients.

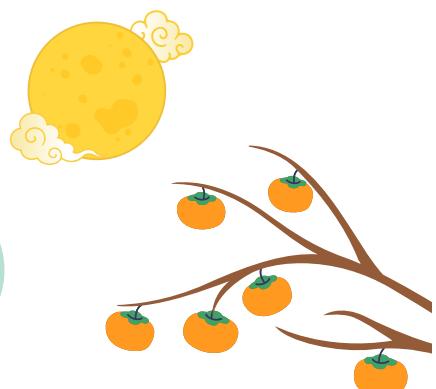
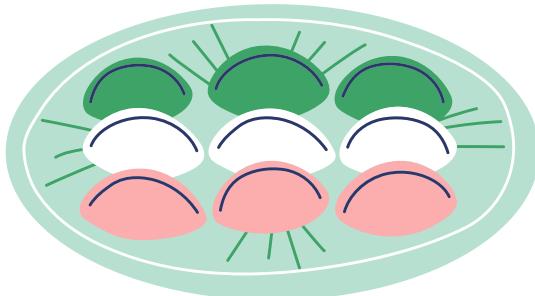
Families visit their ancestors' graves and clear the weeds around the burial mounds. After dusk, families and friends take walks and look at the beauty of the full harvest moon, play games, and sing.

On Chuseok weekend, Korea's highways become extremely congested with traffic, it's one of the worst and most dangerous times to travel. So try to be careful on the road this Chuseok!

# Chuseok (추석)

Let's Discuss!

1. What is Chuseok? Where is it celebrated?
2. When is it celebrated? Who celebrates it?
3. Why is this holiday celebrated?
4. What are some things done on Chuseok?
5. Have you ever celebrated this holiday?
6. What do people visit on this holiday?
7. Why could Chuseok be a dangerous time?
8. What is a favorite food for Chuseok?
9. What is done the night of Chuseok?
10. What is a similar holiday in your culture?  
In some other cultures?



## Celebrating Chuseok



Chuseok (추석) is the \_\_\_\_\_ and most \_\_\_\_\_ holiday in Korea. It is a time when family members from \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ come together to share \_\_\_\_\_, tell \_\_\_\_\_, and give thanks to their \_\_\_\_\_ for the good harvest. Chuseok traditions go back to \_\_\_\_\_ beliefs about the \_\_\_\_\_, the full moon only came \_\_\_\_\_ a \_\_\_\_\_ so it was thought to be a special and meaningful \_\_\_\_\_.

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Families visit their ancestors' \_\_\_\_\_ and clear the \_\_\_\_\_ around the burial mounds. After \_\_\_\_\_, families and friends take walks and look at the beauty of the \_\_\_\_\_ harvest moon, play games, and sing.

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# Celebrating Chuseok

Chuseok (추석), originally known as *Hangawi* (한가위) is a major harvest festival and a three-day holiday in Korea celebrated on the 15th day of the 8th month of the lunar calendar. Like many other harvest festivals, it is held around the Autumn Equinox. As a celebration of the good harvest, Koreans visit their ancestral hometowns and share a feast of Korean traditional food. We take a look at the origins and some of the customs that are followed to this day.

## Origins

As one of Korea's three major holidays, the other two being *Seollal* (New Year's Day) and *Dano* (the 5th of the 5th month of the year according to the lunar calendar), Chuseok is also referred to as *Hangawi*, which means the very middle of August, or August 15th according to the lunar calendar. As an agrarian society throughout history, *Hangawi* was the day when Koreans thanked the ancestors for the year's harvest and shared their abundance with family and friends. Although the exact origin of Chuseok is unclear, Chuseok can be traced back to ancient times and particularly to a religion related to the moon. The sun was considered natural, but the full moon that came once a month to brighten the dark night was seen as a grateful presence. Therefore, festivities took place on the day of the largest full moon, on August 15th of the lunar calendar and thus became, and is to this day, one of the most important days of celebration.

Historically, and according to popular belief, Chuseok originated from *Gabae* which started during the reign of the third king of the kingdom of Silla (57 BC - AD 935), during which a month-long weaving contest was held between two teams. On *Gabae*, the team that wove more cloth won the contest and was treated to a feast by the losing team.

## Chuseok Customs

On the morning of Chuseok, *Songpyeon* (Korean rice cake) and food prepared with the year's fresh harvest are arranged to give thanks to ancestors through *Charye* (ancestor memorial service). After *Charye*, families visit their ancestors' graves and engage in *Beolcho*, where weeds around the burial grounds are removed. As the night falls, families and friends enjoy the beautiful view of the full harvest moon and play folk games such as *Ganggangsullae* (Korean circle dance).

### *Charye*

(ancestor memorial services)



On the morning of Chuseok, family members gather at their homes to hold memorial services in the honour of their ancestors called *Charye*. Formal *Charye* services

are held twice a year during *Seollal* (New Year's Day) and Chuseok. The difference between the two services is that during *Seollal* the major representative food is white *tteok-guk*, (a rice-cake soup), while during Chuseok the major representative food is made from freshly harvested rice. After the service, the family members sit down together at the table to enjoy some delicious food and to express their gratitude for the blessings received.

### *Beolcho*

(removing weeds around the grave) and *Seongmyo* (visiting ancestral graves)



Visiting ancestral graves during Chuseok is known as *Seongmyo* and during this visit, family members usually cut the weeds that have grown around the graves. The custom of

taking care of the ancestral graves and removing weeds is called *Beolcho*. This custom is considered a duty and an expression of devotion. On weekends, about a month prior to the Chuseok holidays, Korea's highways become extremely congested with families visiting their ancestors' graves to fulfill their duties.

## Folk games

### Ssireum (Korean wrestling)



In the past, the strongest of the villagers gathered to hold wrestling competitions. The sport of wrestling on sand while being surrounded by spectators has become a traditional favorite in Korea.

The last wrestler standing was considered the winner and was acknowledged as the strongest man in the village, and took home cotton, rice or a calf as his prize. Today, Ssireum (Korean wrestling) competitions are still held as a folk competition, a one-on-one game to determine the strongest man in Korea.

Other traditional games include, neolttwigi (seesaw jumping), Tuho Deonjigi (arrow throwing), Jegichagi (tassel kicking), and Paengichigi (top spinning).

### Ganggangsullae (Korean circle dance)



Mothers and daughters dressed in hanbok (traditional Korean dress) gather around in a circle, holding hands, and sing together. This dance originated from the Joseon Dynasty during the Japanese

invasion when the Korean army dressed Korean mothers and daughters in military uniforms and had them circle a mountain peak to make the Japanese think the Korean military was greater in number than it actually was.

## New Clothes

### Chuseokbim (Chuseok dress)



Traditionally on Chuseok, the head of the household would buy new clothes for everyone, including the servants. This custom was known as Chuseokbim. Usually, a traditional hanbok

is worn, but nowadays newly purchased clothes are not limited to hanbok. Today, families put on a modern type of hanbok called Chuseokbim, hold Charye services and enjoy a meal together.

## Chuseok Food

Chuseok is a time for rich plentiful harvests. Therefore there are many fruits and newly harvested rice from which rice, tteok, and drinks are made.

### Songpyeon



Songpyeon is one of the most representative of snacks during Chuseok. This rice cake is prepared with rice or non-glutinous rice powder that is kneaded into the perfect size, then filled with sesame seeds, beans, red beans, chestnuts, and a host of other nutritious foods. When steaming the songpyeon, the bottom of the rice cakes are layered with pine needles, which fill the rice cakes with their delightful fragrance. On the eve of Chuseok, in the evening, the entire family gathers together to make songpyeon under the bright moon. There is an old Korean saying that the person who makes the most beautiful songpyeon will find a good-looking spouse. Therefore, the unmarried members of the family try their best to make the nicest looking songpyeon in the hope that the saying will come true!

### Alcoholic Beverages



The traditional Chuseok drink is made of newly harvested rice and is also known as "The Hundred Year" drink. People who look forward to this major holiday share their generosity with family and friends, over drinks.

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