

HISTORY OF POPCORN Reading Comprehension

Popcorn, also known as popping corn, is a special variety of corn (*Zea mays everta*). Each kernel contains a tiny drop of water. When it is heated, the water expands, causing the kernel to explode and flip inside out. Most U.S. popcorn is grown in Nebraska and Indiana, and increasingly in Texas.

Native Americans first discovered popcorn thousands of years ago in Guatemala or Mexico. It was popped in China during the Song Dynasty (960–279) as well as in Sumatra and India long before Columbus reached the Americas.

In 1519, when he invaded Mexico, Spanish Conquistador Hernando Cortes first saw popcorn when he met the Aztecs. Popcorn was important to the Aztecs as food, as decoration for ceremonial headdresses and necklaces, and as ornaments on statues of their gods. Around 1612, French explorers around the Great Lakes met Iroquois who used heated sand in a pottery vessel to make popcorn. There is an unproven theory that an Indian named Quadequina brought a deerskin bag of popped corn for the first Thanksgiving feast on October 15, 1621. In 1948 and 1950, anthropologist Herbert Dick and botanist Earle Smith discovered ears of popcorn in the Bat Cave of west central New Mexico. The ears measured from smaller than a penny to about two inches. They were determined to be about 5,600 years old.

Colonial housewives served popcorn with sugar and cream for breakfast. Some colonists used a cylinder of thin sheet iron that revolved on an axle in front of the fireplace to make popped corn.

In 1885, Charles Cretors of Chicago, Illinois, invented the first popcorn machine. Street vendors were soon pushing steam or gas-powered poppers through fairs, parks, and expositions.

Today much of the popcorn you buy at movies and fairs is popped in machines manufactured by the Cretors family.

In 1914, in Sioux City, Iowa, Clويد H. Smith created America's first branded popcorn (Jolly Time), and for the first time, popcorn was available in grocery stores.

Americans eat more than 17 billion quarts of popcorn a year, an average of 60 quarts per person per year. As the result of an elementary school project, popcorn became the official state snack food of Illinois. January 19 is National Popcorn Day, and October is National Popcorn Month.

1.) Which of the following can be inferred from the passage?

- a.) You should only buy Jolly Time Popcorn.
- b.) Movies are not fun unless you have popcorn.
- c.) Schools are closed on National Popcorn Day.
- d.) Americans eat a lot of popcorn every year.

2.) Popcorn is the official snack of _____.

- a.) the state of Illinois
- b.) the Aztec Indians
- c.) America
- d.) grocery stores

3.) Popcorn is...

- a.) a newer invention.
- b.) thousands of years old.
- c.) hundreds of years old.
- d.) about 50 years old.

4.) Which of the following is NOT true?

- a.) Popcorn was popped at the first Thanksgiving.
- b.) The Popcorn machine was invented by Charles Cretors.
- c.) Popcorn was popped by Colonial housewives.
- d.) Popcorn has been available in grocery stores for hundreds of years.

5.) The Aztec Indians used popcorn as...

Select all that are true.

- a.) decorations
- b.) food
- c.) a weapon against enemies
- d.) ornaments for jewelry

6.) Each kernel of popcorn contains _____.

- a.) corn
- b.) a drop of water
- c.) heat
- d.) milk

7.) What could be a title for the second paragraph?

- a.) How Popcorn is Made Today
- b.) How Past Cultures Made and Used Popcorn
- c.) Popcorn in America!
- d.) How Popcorn Changed World History

8.) Which question is answered in the first paragraph?

- a.) Where was popcorn first popped?
- b.) What is the right temperature to cook popcorn?
- c.) Who likes popcorn?
- d.) How does a kernel of corn turn into popcorn?

9.) What happened first?

- a.) Jolly Time Popcorn became the first brand of popcorn.
- b.) The popcorn machine was invented.
- c.) Ears of popcorn over 5,600 years old were discovered in a New Mexico cave.
- d.) October became National Popcorn Month.

10.) According to the passage...

- a.) Popcorn may have been served at the first Thanksgiving.
- b.) Ears of popcorn 3,000 years old were found in a New Mexico cave.
- c.) The popcorn machine was invented by the Aztec Indians.
- d.) Colonial housewives served popcorn for dinner with sugar and cream.