

# Vale Middle School Reading Article

*Stores Opening on Thanksgiving Day Is Not Something to Be Thankful For (970L)*

**Instructions: COMPLETE ALL QUESTIONS AND MARGIN NOTES using the CLOSE reading strategies practiced in class. This requires reading of the article three times.**

**Step 1: Skim** the article using these symbols as you read:

(+) agree, (-) disagree, (\*) important, (!) surprising, (?) wondering

**Step 2: Number** the paragraphs. **Read** the article **carefully** and **make notes in the margin**.

Notes should include:

- Comments that show that you **understand** the article. (A summary or statement of the main idea of important sections may serve this purpose.)
- Questions you have that show what you are **wondering** about as you read.
- Notes that differentiate between **fact** and **opinion**.
- Observations about how the **writer's strategies** (organization, word choice, perspective, support) and choices affect the article.

**Step 3: A final quick read** noting anything you may have missed during the first two reads.

Your **margin notes** are part of your score for this assessment. Answer the questions carefully in **complete sentences** unless otherwise instructed.

Student \_\_\_\_\_ Class Period \_\_\_\_\_

## Stores opening on Thanksgiving Day is not something to be thankful for

*Thanksgiving used to be about remembering how much we have to be grateful for.  
Now it's about buying more stuff.*

Someday in the not too distant future, I fear that when an immigrant or foreigner asks an American what Thanksgiving is all about, the answer will be shopping, not family, food and gratitude. The list of stores open on Thanksgiving Day keeps growing: Walmart, Toys R Us, Kmart, Old Navy, Sears, Target, JCPenny, Kohl's. Even Macy's, the proud sponsor of the famous turkey day parade, has decided that's not enough. It will open most of its stores at 8pm.

Somehow we have allowed a holiday that was supposed to be about remembering how much we have to be thankful for – even in difficult times – morph into a holiday about what we don't have. Forget pass the turkey, we might as well just pass the coupons. I may be a member of the "give it to me now" generation, but I find this sickening. Of all of the holidays on the calendar, Thanksgiving is the most quintessentially American (or, at least, North American). Sure, there's Independence Day, but most countries have a day like that.

Thanksgiving is our tradition. It dates back to the 1600s to the days of early European settlers in a new land. We romanticize this era in our history books, but the point is most American families were immigrants and farmers at one time. There's unity as we remember those struggles – and the people who helped. It's a day for family and community, a pause before the start of a hectic holiday season. It's not an overtly religious holiday, but somehow it has a spiritual tone to it that resonates across every ethnic and religious background.

Each wave of immigrants has embraced it and brought their own variations – everything from

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turkey fried rice and Caribbean/Latin BBQ to deep-fried and "tofu turkey". Yet in the last decade, we have allowed America's retailers to co-opt this day for their own greed, just as they have with almost every other holiday. You would think that Memorial Day and Veterans Day, created to be deep moments of national reflection about the cost of our freedom, were just extra days to shop. It started with Black Friday. The stores kept opening earlier and earlier. And sadly, shoppers kept coming. I was one of them a few years ago, standing outside Sears at 3am on Friday to buy a new home appliance at deep discount.

But Thanksgiving was always sacred. The only people working were emergency types, hospital staff, and a few journalists. It was bare bones. Even grocery stores closed. Now Thanksgiving is increasingly feeling like any other day of the year. I recently asked my Kmart checkout cashier if the store was open on Thanksgiving Day. "We're open every day," she responded in a monotone voice without even looking up. This is not normal. In other countries, many retailers are still debating whether it's OK to be open on Sundays (or Fridays/Saturdays in parts of the Middle East). Several people – often with well paid jobs that give them Thanksgiving and Black Friday off – have tried to argue that retailer workers *want* to work the extra day.

It's a quaint thought, but I encourage you to actually ask retail employees what it's really like at most stores. Consider the Burlington Coat Factory stock worker who told me that he bets he will work on Thanksgiving this year, but he hasn't been told his schedule. He wants to try to gather and do a meal with his family, but he has no idea when he'll actually know his hours. As for the "extra" pay, a Walmart worker explained to me that it's a farce. "We get time and a half that day, but the next week, they cut hours, so we end up with the same paycheck." Overall, he's not better off. This is the reality of retail work today where stores are utilizing more and more part-time workers and doing everything in their power to ensure there's no net overtime pay. Companies used to close on Thanksgiving because they wanted to be seen as a good employer and neighbor. Now it's just about the bottom line.

On top of that, working Black Thursday and Friday is hellish. Shoppers flood the stores, at times trampling one another to get in the door. There's a campaign on Facebook that reads: "*Because I believe in family, I pledge to not shop on Thanksgiving. If I'm shopping, someone else is working and NOT spending time with their family. Everyone deserves a holiday.*" Unfortunately, it doesn't seem to be helping. Not only are more stores open, but I'm receiving ads encouraging me to come. Surely with technology, we could at least keep the physical stores closed and allow workers to stay home with their families.

Perhaps the greatest irony in all this is that anyone who has been around young kids knows they often get more pleasure out of playing with the box a fancy new toy comes in than the gizmo itself. A friend spent hundreds on new backyard playground equipment only to find her daughter was far more interested in chasing bugs around the yard. Kids' first instinct is often to use what they have, not to go to the store for the latest toy. Yet somewhere along the way, we forget that and can't wait to go buy, buy, buy.

I'm not going shopping on Thanksgiving Thursday. I'm going to try to focus on all that I do have, even in these tough times. But frankly, it might take legislation to save this last great American tradition from being gobbled up by greed.

*Notes on my thoughts, reactions and questions as I read:*

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**Comprehension questions – answers may be in phrases.**

1. *What three qualities does the author believe Thanksgiving should represent?*
2. *What is Black Friday?*
3. *Define **gizmo** as used in the text.*
4. *What literary device is being used in the phrase “gobbled up by greed,” and what does it mean?*
5. *Define **morph** as used in the text.*

8.RI.1,2,3,4,5,6

**2. Answer each question in one or more complete sentences.**

*Explain this quote: “You would think that Memorial Day and Veterans Day, created to be deep moments of national reflection about the cost of our freedom, were just extra days to shop.”*

*What does the author mean by the term **irony** when mentioning that children often play with the box instead of the toy?*

*What is the main purpose of the Facebook campaign mentioned by the author?*

8.RI.3,4,5,10

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3. Explain how the author uses the following as a comparison to support her claim.

- *Veterans Day*
- *Wal-Mart*
- *Independence Day*
- *foreign retailers*
- *tradition*
- *immigrants and farmers*

8.RI.3

4. State the author's point of view in this article. Support your claim with at least one direct quote from the text. What is your personal point of view? Answer in detail with sound reasoning.

8.RI.1,8