

## Sample Lesson

### Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade: How it Began

The Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade skirts along the western edge of Central Park. Then it veers away from the park and heads toward its destination: Macy's department store on Herald Square. The beloved balloons have a history as colorful as the parade itself. Over the years, the characters have been the source of much delight. But they also have caused some calamities.

Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade is famous for its super-sized balloon personalities. The characters have bobbed and weaved their way through New York City almost every year since 1924.

The very first parade featured live animals from Central Park Zoo, as well as Macy's employees dressed in costumes. Many of the employees were immigrants. They wanted to hold an event to thank America and New York City for the opportunities they had been given. They chose a parade, which was a common event in their countries of origin. The 1924 parade also celebrated Macy's growth as a company. It had just become the largest department store in the world.

The first big balloon appeared in 1927. It was Felix the Cat, a favorite cartoon character of the day. The balloon was made of rubber and filled with air. Workers pulled it along. Felix was a big hit with spectators who lined the roughly six-mile parade route. The following year, workers added helium. This allowed Felix to float above the heads of spectators. However, there was no way to deflate the balloon at the end. So, his tethers were cut, and Felix floated upward until he popped!

The following year, balloon creators added release valves to the balloons. Letting the air out prevented a balloon from bursting as it rose into the sky. Instead, a balloon would drift for days, as helium leaked out through the valve. The balloon gradually deflated and eventually fell to the ground. Macy's offered rewards for bringing back the deflated balloons, but few were returned. In 1932, a drifting balloon became tangled up in an airplane wing. As a result of this near disaster, Macy's had to rethink its balloon release method.

Goodyear Tire and Rubber in Akron, Ohio, was the maker of these enormous rubber balloons until World War II. During the war, the American military needed many tons of rubber. It was used in everything from electrical wiring to tank and battleship parts. The Thanksgiving Day Parade organizers put the parade on hold for the first time ever. Instead of making balloons, Macy's management donated the rubber to the war effort. When the parade returned three years later, the balloons were more innovative, and there were more of them.

Eventually, Macy's workers took over the making of balloon characters. They designed and constructed the balloons in an old Tootsie Roll factory in New Jersey. The balloon-making process they began is still in effect today.



Live animals delighted spectators in early Macy's parades.

1. Choose the two synonyms in each line.

parade	procession	inflation	assembly
origins	destination	department	endpoint
spectators	immigrants	onlookers	experts
workers	spectators	personalities	characters
beginning	creative	bulky	innovative

2. Match each term with its clue.

_____ skirts	A) goes along the edge
_____ veers	B) ropes or ties
_____ calamity	C) suddenly changes direction
_____ bobbed	D) mishap; disaster
_____ helium	E) made short up and down movements
_____ tethers	F) gas that is lighter than air

3. Number these events 1–5.

- \_\_\_\_\_ A slow-release valve is added to parade balloons.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Felix the Cat, a favorite cartoon character, steals the show.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Macy’s employees and zoo animals star in a holiday parade.
- \_\_\_\_\_ A parade balloon becomes entangled in an airplane wing.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Macy’s becomes the largest department store in the world.

4. Underline the part of each sentence that states a cause. Double underline the effect.

The Felix balloon floated nicely along the route because workers had added helium.

As a result of the near disaster, Macy’s had to rethink its balloon release method.