

★The History of Thanksgiving Day★

Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is for students to learn the origins of the Thanksgiving Day holiday including the contributions of various racial, ethnic, and religious groups and why it has been celebrated annually for nearly 400 years.

Objective

The student will recognize and understand the origin and the meaning of Thanksgiving Day.

Theme - Unity

Thanksgiving began as a celebration among all of the people in the new nation as a blessing of a full harvest.

Core Knowledge

Grade 3 - Amer Hist & Geog. Sec III: The Thirteen Colonies. C. New England Colonies. The Pilgrims and their voyage from England. The first Thanksgiving and how the colonies began to form a united people.

Time

45 minutes

Materials

- ★ Thanksgiving crossword puzzle
- ★ "History of Thanksgiving Day" handout
- ★ Dictionaries
- ★ Website - www.americanheritage.org

Preparation

- ★ Copy material for each student or group of students.

Focus

Students are to gain an understanding of the reasons the early colonists began the celebration of Thanksgiving. Students will use the reading individually or in groups depending on grade level to assist in the completion of the crossword puzzle. (See Links page on www.americanheritage.org for additional resources on Thanksgiving Day and its history.)

Activity

1. Have students read "The History of Thanksgiving Day" either individually or in groups. Discuss/answer questions in groups or whole class about the reading. Students complete the KWL chart or another reading strategy before and/or after the reading. Complete reading comprehension/discussion sheet.
2. Students complete the crossword puzzle individually or in groups.
3. Have students work in groups to plan/organize their own Thanksgiving celebration and to identify the foods they would eat.

4. Students write a historical role-playing journal entry in which they pretend they are a Pilgrim, Indian, or colonist and what they might have been thankful for in the 1600's or 1700's. Students may also write a journal entry in which they tell about what they themselves are thankful for today. Optional: Students may share their writing with the class or publish/post it.

Closure

Review with students the history of Thanksgiving Day and the ways we borrow from its traditions in our contemporary celebration of the holiday.

Assessment

Students will write a paragraph or journal entry explaining why we celebrate Thanksgiving and stating whether they think it is a meaningful holiday for the new century.



K-W-L Chart

What I Know	What I Want to Know	What I Learned



The History of Thanksgiving Day

The Pilgrims of Plymouth Colony landed in Massachusetts on the *Mayflower* in the fall of 1620. They did not have time to build proper shelter or to plant and **harvest** crops before the brutal winter arrived. During that first winter, nearly half of the Pilgrims died from disease or starvation. The following year, with the help of local Indians, the Pilgrims had a good harvest. They thanked God for the harvest with three days of prayer and feasting in the fall of 1621.

Later, after the colonists had won their independence from Great Britain, the new Congress of the United States asked President George Washington to “recommend to the people of the United States a day of public thanksgiving and prayer to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many signal favors of Almighty God, especially by affording them an opportunity peaceably to establish a form of government for their safety and happiness.” On Thursday, November 26, 1789, President Washington issued the first Thanksgiving **proclamation**:

*Whereas it is duty of all Nations to **acknowledge** the **providence** of Almighty God, to obey his will, to be grateful for his benefits, and humbly to **implore** his protection and favor, I do recommend and assign Thursday the 26th day of November next to be devoted by the People of these States to the Service of that great and glorious Being who is the **beneficent** Author of all the good that was, that is, or that will be.*

President Washington proclaimed another Thanksgiving Day in 1795. Later the governors of the states proclaimed Thanksgiving Days.

In 1863, during the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln made Thanksgiving a national annual holiday to be celebrated the last Thursday in November. His proclamation said, “I invite my fellow citizens of the United States to observe the last Thursday of November as a day of Thanksgiving and praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in heaven.” Since 1863, except for two years (1939 and 1940) when President Franklin D. Roosevelt moved the holiday to the third Thursday of November, Thanksgiving has been celebrated every year on the fourth Thursday in November.



The History of Thanksgiving Day

1. Define:

★ *harvest*

★ *proclamation*

★ *acknowledge*

★ *providence*

★ *implore*

★ *beneficent*

2. Describe the problems facing the Pilgrims in the fall of 1620.

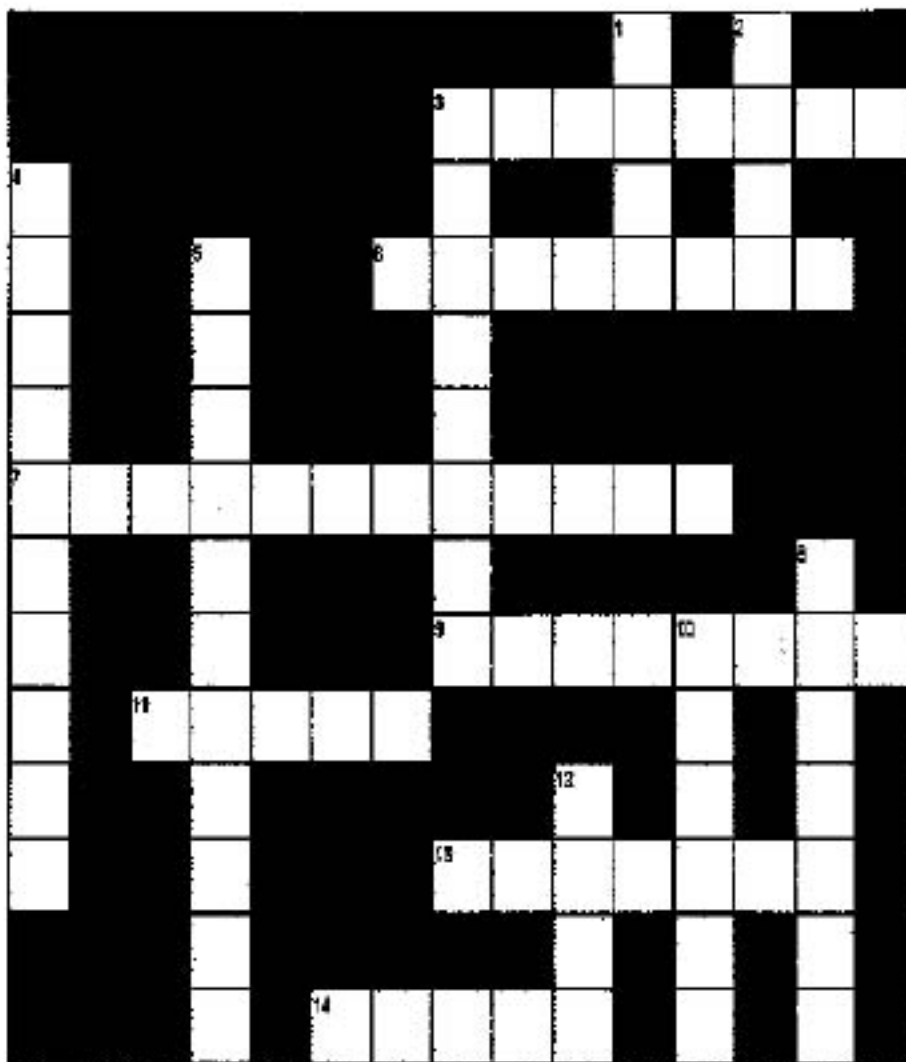
3. Why did the Pilgrims have three days of prayer and feasting in the fall of 1621?

4. Why do you think the colonists would want to have a day of thanksgiving after the war with Great Britain?

5. What war was the United States fighting when Abraham Lincoln made Thanksgiving a national holiday in 1863?

6. What day and month was finally chosen to celebrate Thanksgiving Day?

Thanksgiving



Across	Down
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- 3. spuds
- 6. grace
- 7. gratitude
- 9. turkey dressing
- 11. sauce
- 13. land of the free
- 14. type of bread

- 1. candied vegetables
- 2. maize
- 3. English settlers
- 4. carrots, beans, etc.
- 5. small red berries
- 8. Native Americans
- 10. close-knit group
- 12. small, green vegetables

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