



## Animated Thanksgiving™

### The Original Thanksgiving

Many cultures all over the world hold festivals or ceremonies to celebrate the fall harvest. But Thanksgiving was a real event in America in 1621 - that's almost 400 years ago!

The Pilgrims first came to North America on the ship The Mayflower in 1620, landing in what is now Massachusetts. Taking such a long journey to such a cold climate was hard on their health, and almost half of those first Pilgrims died of scurvy and pneumonia. Because the Pilgrims brought germs from Europe that were unknown in the New World, hundreds of Native Americans also got sick and died.

Times were very tough. The Pilgrims might not have survived if they had not met one person who changed American history: the Native American Tisquantum, known to us as Squanto.

Squanto had a lot happen to him in life. As a youth, Squanto was kidnapped by English merchants who were exploring the New World. They took him to England, where he learned English and was used as an interpreter and guide in North America by the Plymouth Company.

While he was back in the New World he was kidnapped again by an English trader. He was shipped to Spain to be sold as a slave, but was taken in by some Spanish friars. Squanto sailed back to America only to discover that every single person in his tribe had died of plague. He lived in another Wampanoag village until he heard the Pilgrims had landed.

### The first Thanksgiving

The Pilgrims were in danger of starving. Squanto taught them how to fertilize and grow corn and barley, and where to fish. In the fall, the harvest was plentiful. The Pilgrims elected a governor named William Bradford who proclaimed a day of thanksgiving for the bounty.

Hunters from the colony brought geese and ducks (what, no turkey?). Fish, lobster, clams, dried fruit and corn were also on the menu. The Pilgrims invited the Wampanoag chief





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Massasoit and ninety from his tribe, who brought five deer to the feast.

Can you believe that only four Pilgrim women and two girls made Thanksgiving dinner for fifty-six Pilgrims and ninety Native Americans? That's a lot of work!

Although the feast was a huge success, hard times, difficult harvests, and many new colonist mouths to feed meant that there was no Thanksgiving feast the next year or in many years to come.

### **The second Thanksgiving**

Over 150 years after the original Thanksgiving dinner, in 1777, when the Americans defeated the British at Saratoga, there was another one-time feast.

### **The holiday of Thanksgiving**

After the Battle of Gettysburg in 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued a proclamation that the last Thursday in November was to be a national day of Thanksgiving for all of America.

The first Thanksgiving dinner was likely in October, but President Lincoln may have wanted Thanksgiving Day to match the date of the Pilgrim's original landing at Plymouth in 1620, which was in November.

In 1939 President Franklin D. Roosevelt fixed Thanksgiving as the fourth Thursday in November, to make sure you get enough shopping days before Christmas!

In Canada, Thanksgiving was appointed by a new proclamation every single year. It could land anywhere in October or November. In 1957 it was fixed as the second Monday in October, closer to the original date of the original Thanksgiving.

### **Happy Thanksgiving!**





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## Activity:

Make a list of things for which to be Thankful.

## Idea starters:

- People you know
- People you don't know
- Things you have, can do, or that make you happy
- Things or people that have made your life better, or you a better person
- Things that have happened to you
- Things that have NOT happened to you!
- People, events, or things you are proud of

