

THANKSGIVING

A North American Tradition

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Thanksgiving is a special holiday for both Americans and Canadians. This festival is celebrated in much the same way in both countries, although in Canada Thanksgiving is always celebrated on the second Monday of October whereas in the United States it is celebrated on the fourth Thursday of November. Thanksgiving is usually a family holiday, celebrated with big dinners and joyous reunions. On this day people give thanks for blessings received during the year.



After the first harvest, the pilgrims were so thankful that they had a new land and enough food to eat that they planned a special day for giving thanks to God. To celebrate they had a big feast which lasted three days. The Pilgrims and the Native American Indians, who had helped them through the hardships and the long cold winter, celebrated together. The ninety Indians who were invited brought five deer and the menu included goose, duck, turkey, fish, fruit and vegetables, such as pumpkins. Many of these foods were typical of the new world and not available to people in Europe.

Nowadays roast turkey has become the symbol of this holiday dinner, but no Thanksgiving meal would be complete without corn on the cob, cranberry sauce and pumpkin pie.

The tradition began with the colonists of Plymouth, Massachusetts, in 1621.

The first Thanksgivings were harvest festivals or days for thanking God for plentiful crops. This is why Thanksgiving is celebrated in autumn and one of the symbols is the horn of plenty (cornucopia).



What did the Pilgrims eat during the three-day harvest celebration?

Ask your pupils to draw a cornucopia with the foods available to the Pilgrims.

Foods available to the Pilgrims for their Thanksgiving in 1621



FISH: cod, bass, herring, eel

SEAFOOD: clam, lobster, mussel

POULTRY AND FOWL: turkey, goose, duck, partridge, chicken

OTHER MEAT: deer

FRUIT: raspberries, strawberries, grapes, plums, cherries, blueberries

VEGETABLES: peas, pumpkin, beans, onions, carrots

NUTS: walnuts, chestnuts

