

5

Rethinking Thanksgiving



Source: Adobe Stock/fahrwasser

5 a

Speaking

Warm-up: talking about celebrations

Get into small groups and talk about the following:

- » What do you celebrate?
- » What have you heard / learned about Thanksgiving?
- » What similar kind of festival do people in Austria celebrate?



Source: Adobe Stock/
Natalia

5 b

Listening

Getting to know the Wampanoag

The **Wampanoag** ("People of the First Light") are one of many nations of people all over North America who were here long before any Europeans arrived. In the 1600s, this tribe had as many as **40,000 people** in about **67 villages** that made up the Wampanoag Nation. These villages covered the territory along the East coast, Cape Cod and the islands.



To learn more about the Wampanoag before the arrival of the so-called 'Pilgrims', watch the [video clip](#) and answer the questions in one to four words.

Southern New England, 1620–22

1. How many inhabitants did Wampanoag villages have?
2. What happened in 1616?
3. How many people died?
4. What did English fishermen and explorers subsequently find?
5. When was Tisquantum kidnapped?
6. What did Europeans believe when they arrived on the Wampanoag territory?

5 c

Speaking

Picturing Thanksgiving – the White Americans' (European) perspective

Thanksgiving was proclaimed a **national holiday** only in 1863 by Abraham Lincoln after the Battle of Gettysburg with more than 50,000 casualties. But Thanksgiving celebrations date back to the 18th century. Subsequently, a market for **idyllic Thanksgiving scenes** developed.



Jean Leon Gerome Ferris,
The First Thanksgiving 1621,
painted ca. 1912–1915

Source: Wikimedia Commons (public domain)

Get in pairs and describe the painting above. You might use a higher-resolution version from the internet to examine the details more closely. Mind using continuous forms! Focus on the following:

- » the two groups and how they are arranged
- » the atmosphere of the scene
- » stereotypes in the representation of the Wampanoag
- » the relationship between the colonists and the indigenous people

5 d

Reading

Changing the perspective

Read the text about indigenous peoples' view of Thanksgiving. Some parts are missing. Choose the correct part (A–J) for each gap (1–7). There are two extra parts that you should not use. Write your answers in the spaces provided. The first one (0) has been done for you.

AE

Thanksgiving from an indigenous perspective



Illustration
of Squanto
teaching the
colonists to
plant maize,
1911

The term
'New England'
denotes the
northeastern
part of the USA.
It was first
coined by an
English explorer
around 1616.

When I think back about my earliest memories of elementary school, I remember being asked to bring a brown paper sack to class so that it could be decorated and worn as part of the Indian costume used to celebrate Thanksgiving. Looking back, I now know this was wrong. [...] The Thanksgiving Indian costume that all the other children and I made in my elementary classroom trivialized and degraded the descendants of the proud Wampanoags, (0) ... The costumes we wore bore no resemblance to Wampanoag clothing of that time period. When children are young, they are often exposed to antiquated images of American Indians through cartoons, books, and movies. But Thanksgiving re-enactments may be their most active personal encounter with Indian America, (1) ... [...] Much harm has been done to generations of Indian people by perpetuating negative and harmful images in young minds. Presenting

Thanksgiving to children as primarily a happy time trivializes our shared history and teaches a half-truth. [...]

Let's begin with Squanto (aka Tisquantum), a Patuxet, one of more than 50 tribes who formed the Wampanoag Confederacy. Around 1614, when he was perhaps 30, (2) ... where they were sold into slavery. Monks in Spain bought Squanto, shared their faith with him, and made it possible for him to find his way to England in 1615. In England, he worked for shipbuilder John Slany and became proficient in English. In 1619, Squanto returned to his homeland by joining an exploring expedition along the New England coast. (3) ... all his family and the rest of his tribe had been exterminated by a devastating plague.

What about the Pilgrims?

Separatists who fled from England to Holland seeking to escape religious persecution by Eng-

Source: Wikimedia Commons (public domain)

Grand Sachem:
king of a native
tribe / nation

venison:
Rehfleisch
clam: Venus-
muschel



gourd:
Flaschenkürbis
emissary:
Abgesandte/r
confederacy:
Bündnis

45

50

55

60

65

lish authorities, and who later booked passage to North America, are now called "Pilgrims." In November 1620, the Mayflower dropped anchor in present-day Provincetown Harbor. After exploring the coast for a few weeks, the Pilgrims landed and began building a permanent settlement on the ruins of Squanto's Patuxet village, now renamed New Plymouth. (4) ...

Squanto was introduced to the Pilgrims in the spring of 1621, became friends with them, and taught them how to hunt and fish in order to survive in New England. He taught the Pilgrims how to plant corn by using fish as fertilizer and how to plant gourds around the corn so that the vines could climb the cornstalks. Squanto also became an interpreter and emissary between the English and Wampanoag Confederacy.

What really happened at the first Thanksgiving in 1621?

The Pilgrims did not introduce the concept of thanksgiving; the New England tribes already had autumn harvest feasts of thanksgiving. (5) ... In the fall of 1621, William Bradford, the governor of the Plymouth Colony, decided to

have a Plymouth harvest feast of thanksgiving and invited Massasoit, the Grand Sachem of the Wampanoag Federation, to join the Pilgrims. Massasoit came with approximately 90 warriors and brought food to add to the feast, including venison, lobster, fish, wild fowl, clams, oysters, eel, corn, squash and maple syrup. Massasoit and the 90 warriors stayed in Plymouth for three days.

(6) ... On May 26, 1637, near the present-day Mystic River in Connecticut, while their warriors were away, an estimated 400 to 700 Pequot women, children, and old men were massacred and burned by combined forces of the Plymouth, Massachusetts Bay, and Saybrook (Connecticut) colonies and Narragansett and Mohegan allies. (7) ... Pequot slaves were sent to Bermuda and the West Indies. In 1975, the official number of Pequot people living in Connecticut was 21. Similar declines in Native population took place throughout New England as an estimated three hundred thousand Indians died by violence, and even more were displaced, in New England over the next few decades.

70

75

80

85

- A Within the first year, half of the 102 Pilgrims who set out from Europe on the Mayflower had perished.
- B Colonial authorities found justification to kill most of the Pequot men and enslave the captured women and their children
- ☒ C whose ancestors attended the first Thanksgiving popularized in American culture.
- D When he arrived at the village where he had been raised
- E and up to 90 percent of the people in the Wampanoag villages had been killed by an epidemic
- F Squanto was kidnapped along with others of his people and taken across the Atlantic Ocean to Malaga, Spain,
- G Squanto died in 1622, but Massasoit outlived the era of relative peace in colonial New England
- H When the Pilgrims first came to Cape Cod, they found flourishing villages
- I To the original people of this continent, each day is a day of thanksgiving to the Creator
- J and many American children associate Thanksgiving actions and images with Indian culture for the rest of their lives

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
C							

Test format
Multiple matching

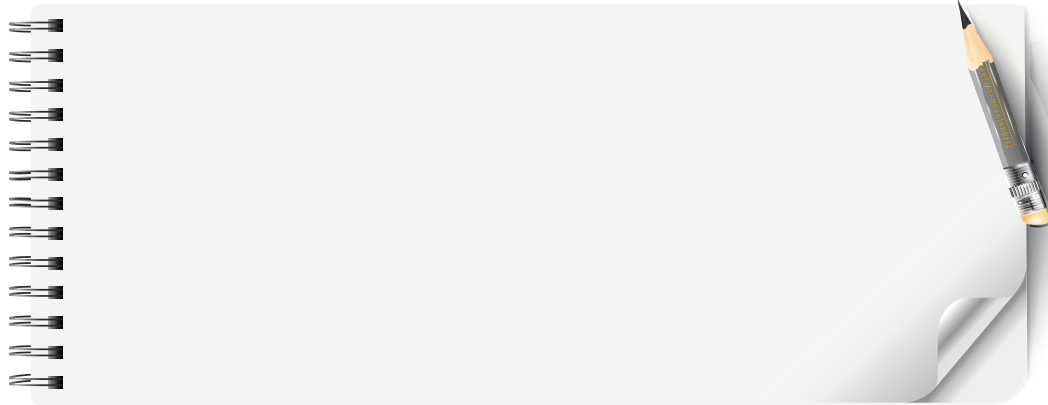
Source: Adobe Stock/
Tamara Kulikova
Source: www.smithsonianmag.com/blogs/national-museum-american-indian/2022/11/23/thanksgiving-from-an-indigenous-perspective/
Dennis Zotigh

5 e

Getting the most important points of the text

Follow-up

Write down the most important aspects of the text in 5 d here. Mention at least three. Explain the role of Squanto.



5 f

Debunking the myths of Thanksgiving

Listening

Listen to the ballad about popular Thanksgiving myths. After listening, find a suitable heading for each verse (1–3).



Track 1

Then get into small groups and discuss the meaning of the ballad and how you like it.

More Than Just a Feast [AI]

1

They say the Pilgrims broke their bread,
With Wampanoag by the fire,
A peaceful tale that's long been spread,
Of unity to admire.

But history hides the deeper truth,
A fragile truce, not friendship's proof.
The guns came later, not the grace –
What's left behind is not erased.

truce: Waffenstill-
stand

shellfish: Krabben,
Meerestiere
morn: morning

*It's more than just a feast, more than
pumpkin pie,*

*There's a silence in the story, and
a deeper cry.*

*We owe more than thanks, we owe the
truth we've missed –*

*It's time to break the myths behind the
mist.*

*It's more than just a feast, more than
family grace,
There's more beneath the legends that
we chase.
We owe more than thanks, ...*

3

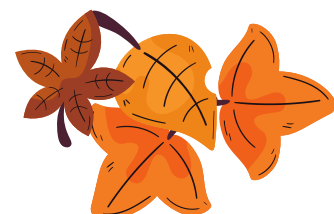
No golden bird upon the plate,
Just venison and corn,
Shellfish from the nearby shore,
In autumn's early morn.
No pies, no forks, no pilgrim hat,
No feast quite like the ones we chat.
But still we dress the table bright,
And gloss the past in candlelight.

*It's more than just a feast, more than
tales retold,
Truth isn't less because it's old.
We owe more than thanks, ...*

2

They didn't call it "Thanksgiving" then,
No holiday, no prayer of cheer.
They fasted when they spoke to God,
Not when harvests reappeared.
The name was pinned on years ahead,
By leaders crafting tales instead.
A story stretched to fit the mold –
Not all that glitters should be told.

to pin on:
festmachen;
(hier:) prägen
to craft a tale: to
make up a tale
to fit the mold:
ins Bild passen,
den Erwartungen
entsprechen



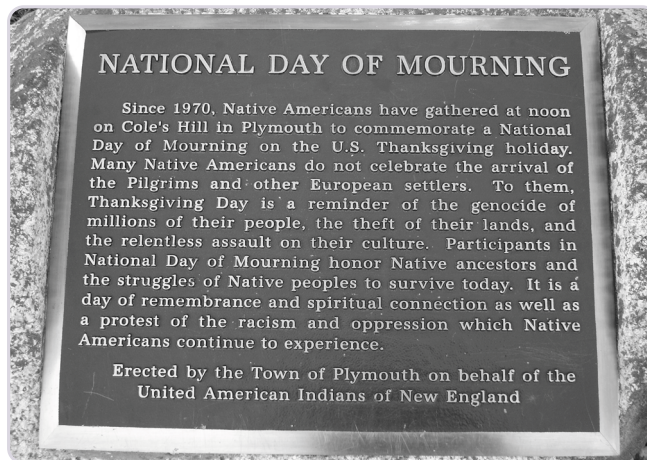
Source: Adobe Stock/
Manuel

5 g

Writing

A National Day of Mourning

You found this image of the National Day of Mourning plaque on the internet while researching Thanksgiving traditions in the USA.



Source: Wikimedia Commons/Melissa Doroquez (Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 Generic license)



Text type
Article

You have decided to write an article about the Native American perspective of this popular tradition. In your **article** you should:

- » show why many Native Americans are critical of the way Thanksgiving is taught at schools
- » explain the message of the plaque
- » analyse some myths of Thanksgiving

Give your article **a title**. Write around **250 words**.

5 h

Language in use

Looking beneath the surface

Read the text about the real history of Thanksgiving. Some words are missing. Use the words in brackets to form the missing word for each gap (1–14). Write your answers in the spaces provided. The first one (0) has been done for you.

The real history behind Thanksgiving

Most American children are not taught about the savage raping, killing, and pillaging that Natives endured during this time. Another criticism of many primary and (0) **(second)** schools' curricula is that very little is taught in school about the history and culture of the Native (1) **(common)** in general. In fact, around 87% of state-level history standards do not mention Native history after 1900. Let alone teaching students the tremendous impact Native people have had on contemporary US society. Due to the severe erasure of Native history, Thanksgiving has been whitewashed, and many have been taught an (2) **(complete)** and, in some cases, inaccurate understanding of what happened.

The (3) **(true)** is that for the Wampanoag tribe – among other Native tribes –, the fourth Thursday in November is considered a day of (4) **(mourn)**, not a day of celebration. Although the Wampanoags did help the Pilgrims survive, their support was followed by years of slow, unfolding genocide of their people and (5) **(steal)** their land.

Here are four vital facts behind the real story of Thanksgiving:

1. Although there are records of a celebration taking place, there is no (6) **(evident)** to support that the Wampanoag tribe was present or invited to the feast. An account said 90 members of the Wampanoag tribe were present, but does not indicate that members of the tribe were invited. Some (7) **(history)** believe that these 90 men were an army sent by Wampanoag leader Ousamequin at the sound of gunshots, which was a part of the celebration.

AE

to pillage: to violently steal or plunder, especially during war

2. To be clear, (8) ___ (**interact**) between the Pilgrims and the Wampanoag people were anything but friendly, and the Pilgrims were the (9) ___ (**aggressive**). During their first encounter with the Wampanoag people, the Pilgrims stole from the tribe's winter (10) ___ (**provide**). Although later, Ousamequin formed an alliance between the groups, the alliance was only established after the Wampanoag people were ravaged by diseases brought by European colonizers during previous years. This decision was more so a measured attempt at (11) ___ (**survive**) than it was to ensure intercultural harmony.
3. Extreme discord continued after the first harvest when (12) ___ (**dead**) conflicts between white colonizers and Native people erupted. After becoming allies, the Europeans went back on their promise and proceeded to seize Native land and imprison, (13) ___ (**slave**), and execute Native people.
4. Thanksgiving celebrations that took place among European (14) ___ (**settle**) often followed brutal victories over Native people, like the Pequot Massacre of 1636 and the beheading of the Wampanoag leader, Metacom, in 1676.

Write your answers here:

0	secondary	5		10	
1		6		11	
2		7		12	
3		8		13	
4		9		14	

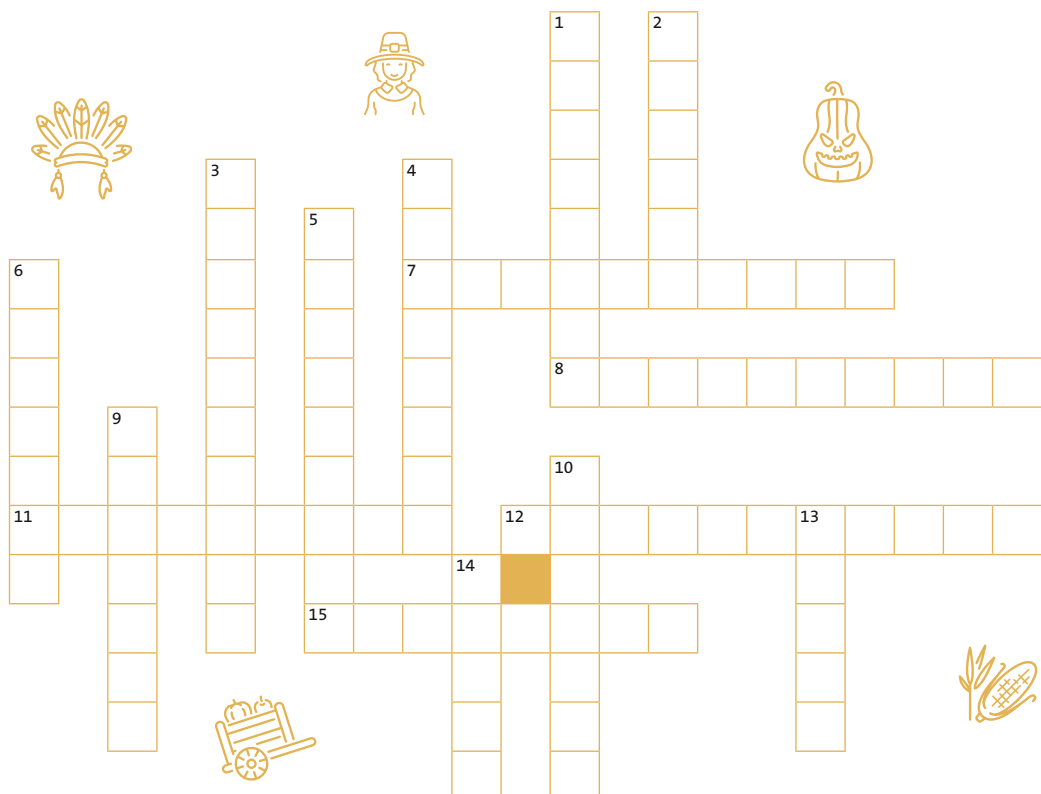
Test format
Word formation

5 i

Time for revising the new words

Vocabulary

Use the clues below to solve the crossword puzzle.



Source: Adobe Stock/Prosymbols

Snap Shot ✨ [O]

Down:

- 1 group of Europeans who came to Cape Cod in 1620
- 2 epidemic
- 3 cruel domination
- 4 person who acts as a representative between groups
- 5 name of the tribe who lived around Cape Cod
- 6 name of a Native American who acted as interpreter
- 9 process of gathering in crops (corn, ...)
- 10 meat of deer
- 13 agreement between enemies to stop fighting for a certain time
- 14 a kind of pumpkin

Across:

- 7 people living in an area before the arrival of the colonists
- 8 simplified image of a person, group or thing
- 11 area of land controlled by a tribe / state
- 12 acting out of a past event (*no hyphen!*)
- 15 deliberate killing of a large number of people from a nation

5 j

Listening

bogs: Sümpfe, Moor

Cranberry Day – part I

For centuries, the Wampanoags have gathered on every **second Tuesday in October** to celebrate the harvesting of cranberries in the bogs of Martha's Vineyard. Even today, it is a day to give thanks to 'the Creator' for another year's harvest. In former times, the Wampanoag traded the cranberries for other goods like sugar.



- » Watch the  [video clip](#) and find out why the descendants of the Wampanoag still cherish Cranberry Day.
- » Take some notes.



Source: Adobe Stock/margo555

5 k

Speaking

Cranberry Day – part II

Get into small groups and talk about:

- » traditions / feasts you and your family honor
- » whether you would pass them on to the next generation



Source: Adobe Stock/antto