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? _____

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5 c **Reading**

Looking at the origins of Thanksgiving

Read the text about the first Thanksgiving. Choose the correct heading from the list (A–H) for each paragraph (1–5). There are two extra headings that you should not use. Write your answers in the spaces provided. The first one (0) has been done for you.

AE

The first Thanksgiving

corn: Mais



to fertilize: düngen

(to) harvest: Ernte; ernten

On the fourth Thursday of November, people in the United States celebrate Thanksgiving, a national holiday honoring the early settlers and Native Americans who came together to have a historic harvest feast.

0 ___

Long before settlers came to the East Coast of the United States, the area was inhabited by many Native American tribes. The area where the first Thanksgiving took place is now known as southeastern Massachusetts and eastern Rhode Island. It had been the home of the Wampanoag people for over 12,000 years and had been visited by other European settlers before the arrival of the Mayflower in 1620. The native people knew the land well and had fished, hunted, and harvested for thousands of generations. The contact with the Europeans was deadly for many Wampanoag, who died from diseases brought by the explorers.

1 ___

The people who founded the Plymouth Colony were a group of English Protestants called Puritans who wanted to break away from the Church of England. These "separatists" initially moved to Holland. But after 12 years of financial problems, they received funding from English merchants to sail across the Atlantic Ocean in 1620 to settle in a "New World." Carrying 101 men, women, and children, the Mayflower traveled the ocean for 66 days and was supposed to land where New York City is now located. But windy conditions forced the group to cut their trip short and settle at what is now Cape Cod, Massachusetts.

2 ___

As the Puritans prepared for winter, they gathered anything they could find, including Wampanoag supplies. One day, Samoset, a leader of the Abenaki people, and Tisquantum (better known as Squanto) visited the settlers. Squanto was a Wampanoag who had experience with other settlers and knew English. Squanto helped the settlers grow corn and use fish to fertilize their fields. After several meetings, a formal agreement was made between the settlers and the native people, and in March 1621, they joined together to protect each other from other tribes.

3 ___

One day that fall, four settlers were sent to hunt for food for a harvest celebration. The Wampanoag heard gunshots and alerted their leader, Massasoit, who thought the English might be preparing for war. Massasoit visited the English settlement with 90 of his men to see if the war rumor was true.



Bronze statue of Massasoit in Plymouth, Massachusetts

Source: Adobe Stock/Maks Peoplenko

Source: Adobe Stock/AndreasJ

Soon after their visit, the Native Americans realized that the English were only hunting for the harvest feast. Massasoit sent some of his own men to hunt deer for the feast and for three days, the English and native men, women, and children ate together. The meal consisted of deer, corn, shellfish, and roasted meat, different from today's traditional Thanksgiving feast. They played ball games, sang, and danced.

4 ___

The peace between the Native Americans and settlers lasted for only a generation. The Wampanoag people do not share the popular reverence for the traditional New England Thanksgiving. For them, the holiday is a reminder of betrayal and bloodshed. Since 1970, many native people have gathered at the statue of Massasoit in Plymouth, Massachusetts, each Thanksgiving Day to remember their ancestors and the strength of the Wampanoag.

deer: Wild

merchant: Kaufmann

shellfish: Schalentiere, Meeresfrüchte

reverence: Verehrung

betrayal: Betrug

supplies: Vorräte

the Abenaki: an indigenous people of northeastern North America who have lived for thousands of years in areas that are now part of Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine (USA) and southern Quebec (Canada)

ancestors: Vorfahrinnen/Vorfahren

5./6. Klasse
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5 ___

In the 19th century, the modern Thanksgiving holiday started to take shape. In 1846, Sarah Josepha Hale, editor of a magazine called *Godey's Lady's Book*, campaigned for an annual national Thanksgiving holiday. But it wasn't until 1863, when President Abraham Lincoln declared two national Thanksgivings; one in August to commemorate the Battle of Gettysburg during the Civil War, and the other in November to give thanks for "general blessings." It's the second one that is celebrated today.

Source: kids.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/first-thanksgiving

Test format
Multiple matching

A	The celebration
B	Stealing the land
~~C~~	Native Americans
D	The Native Americans' view
E	The settlers
F	Present-day Thanksgiving
G	Deadly diseases
H	Settling and learning from the Natives

0	1	2	3	4	5
C					

5 d
Speaking

Idealising the first Thanksgiving

After Abraham Lincoln had declared Thanksgiving a national holiday, painters and illustrators created images of the beginning of this celebration. Usually, these images presented an ideal picture of what happened back in the 1620s. But most (White) Americans liked these pictures because they did not remind them of what their ancestors had done to the Native Americans. One of these pictures is *The First Thanksgiving at Plymouth* (1914) by Jennie A. Brownscombe.

Get into small groups and look at the painting carefully. Describe it in detail using the present continuous.

» How are the groups arranged, how do they differ? What does this tell us about their relationship?
» What do you think is historically incorrect?

Hint: You could research some info about the painting on the internet.



Source: Wikimedia Commons (public domain)

The First Thanksgiving at Plymouth (1914) by Jennie A. Brownscombe

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5 e
Language in use

to mourn: trauern

Mourning rather than celebrating

Read the text about Thanksgiving. Some words are missing. Choose the correct word (A–Q) for each gap (1–14). There are two extra words that you should not use. Write your answers in the spaces provided. The first one (0) has been done for you.



Source: Wikimedia Commons (public domain)

1911 illustration of Tisquantum (aka Squanto) showing the Plymouth colonists how to plant corn.

AE

Thanksgiving and Native Americans: a complicated history

There is a common tale that American students hear about the first Thanksgiving celebration: a (0) ___ of friendly Native Americans welcomed the Pilgrims to the continent, taught them how to live, and sat down to dinner with them. However, this Thanksgiving story is a myth.

The colonists, (1) ___ as Pilgrims, arrived in 1620 in what is now Plymouth, Massachusetts, a land abandoned by most Patuxet Indians due to a (2) ___ outbreak. After a harsh winter in which half of the (3) ___ who couldn't adjust to the land died, the last surviving Patuxet, Tisquantum (also known as Squanto), helped the Pilgrims by (4) ___ them to catch eel and grow corn. He served as an interpreter until (5) ___ from the same disease that had wiped out his tribe. The Wampanoag leader, Massasoit, who also lived in the surrounding area, provided food to the colonists (6) ___ the challenging first winter.

The Pilgrims celebrated their first harvest in 1621, likely between September 21st and November 11th, with 50 Mayflower passengers and 90 Native Americans. This feast followed the harvest and was (7) ___ by Pilgrim women and servants.

According to some accounts, the harvest feast was intended for the Pilgrims, but Native Americans (8) ___ the celebration after hearing celebratory gunfire, contributing their own foods. The Wampanoag had not been (9) ___ beforehand.

However, the relationship between the two societies later became (10) ___, which led to one of the most horrific colonial Indian wars. In the years that followed, the settlers committed (11) ___ against Native tribes, and they also (12) ___ Wampanoag graves and stole food from them to survive during their first years on the continent. This is the (13) ___ why Native Americans don't see Thanksgiving as a celebration, but as a day of (14) ___, to remember what some call the genocide of native tribes in America.

to abandon: verlassen
Patuxet: a Wampanoag group
eel: Aal
interpreter: Übersetzer/in
genocide: Völkermord

Source: Alonso Martínez – english.elpais.com/usa/2024-11-27/thanksgiving-and-native-americans-a-complicated-history.html

A	disease	**G**	known	**M**	settlers
B	during	**H**	massacres	**N**	stole
C	dying	**I**	mourning	**O**	teaching
~~**D**~~	group	**J**	prepared	**P**	while
E	invited	**K**	reason	**Q**	worse
F	joined	**L**	robbed		

Test format
Banked gap-fill

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

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5 f
Listening

Debunking the myths of Thanksgiving

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

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.

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.

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.

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, ...

to craft a tale: to make up a tale
to fit the mold: ins Bild passen, den Erwartungen entsprechen
truce: Waffenstillstand
morn: morning
to gloss: beschönigen
to pin on: festmachen; hier: prägen

5 g
Vocabulary

Time for revising the new words

Find the following words in the word search. Words can be hidden in any direction.



celebration • mourning • abandon • disease • massacre • tribe • colonists • genocide • truce • shellfish • Wampanoag • territory • harvest • corn • supplies • deer • ancestors • pilgrims • fertilize • Squanto

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