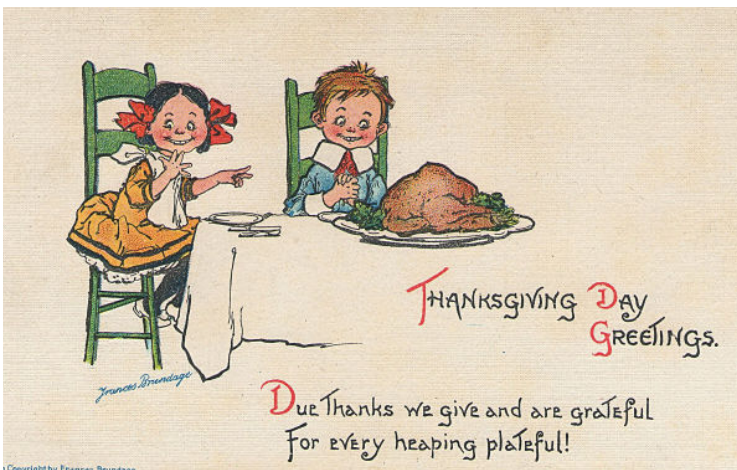
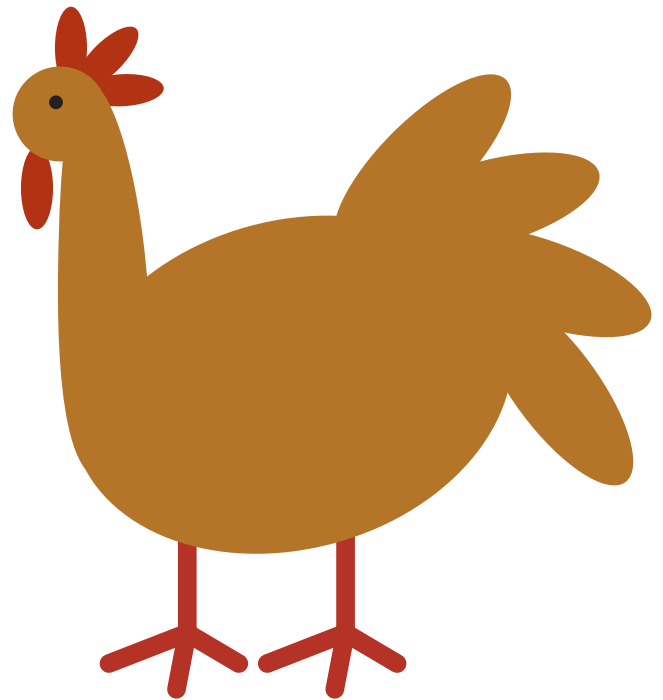


# THANKSGIVING

## DID YOU KNOW?

- There are actually 12 claims as to where the first Thanksgiving took place, other than with the Plymouth Pilgrims: two in Texas, two in Florida, one in Maine, two in Virginia, and five in Massachusetts.
- Ben Franklin always thought the turkey should be our national bird. He wrote in a letter to his daughter that the eagle had “bad moral character,” while the turkey was a “much more respectable bird.”
- In 1953, Swanson didn’t sell nearly the number of frozen turkeys it thought it would that Thanksgiving. Someone had the idea to slice up the meat and repackage it with some trimmings on the side - and the first TV dinner was born.
- 91% of Americans eat turkey on Thanksgiving.
- The heaviest turkey ever raised was 86 pounds, about the size of a large dog.



< This postcard, from sometime before 1913, shows children participating in traditional Thanksgiving festivities: feasting and giving thanks.



Der Sommer, a painting about harvest by Abel Grimmer

# Origin

Thanksgiving is a national public holiday celebrated on the fourth Thursday of November in the United States. The Thanksgiving we celebrate today is a blend of the Pilgrim custom of giving thanks after a plentiful harvest (which came from ancient English harvest festivals), and the Puritan Thanksgiving, which was a religious ceremony of prayer and feasting.



Thanksgiving at Plymouth by Jennie Augusta Brownscombe

The act of celebrating after a successful harvest is an ancient tradition all over the world, and long before Europeans ever arrived in the Americas, native tribes regularly took part in ceremonies and dances to give thanks for bountiful harvests, and for the hope of a good growing season in the spring. There are also several recorded instances of early thanksgiving services held by various European colonists in the New World prior to the Mayflower and the Pilgrims.



Sarah Josepha Hale

But the famous account most often referred to as “The First Thanksgiving” is the story of the Pilgrims of Plimoth Plantation in Massachusetts. In 1621, after a harsh year of drought, sickness, and starvation, the Pilgrims (helped by Squanto and the Wampanoag Indian tribe) were blessed with an abundant autumn harvest. Governor William Bradford invited Chief Massasoit of the Wampanoags to a three-day feast of Thanksgiving (also known as “Harvest Home”). Ninety of the chief’s men came along to join the colonists in this celebration of thanks.

Festivals of Thanksgiving in the autumn or early winter were held sporadically in the following years, often as religious observances, and later as civil traditions. In 1777, the Continental Congress declared the first national Thanksgiving. On October 3, 1789, President George Washington proclaimed that the people of the United States should observe “a day of public thanksgiving and prayer” on Thursday, the 26th of November. Presidents Adams, Madison, and Monroe also proclaimed days of Thanksgiving, but it was not consistently celebrated each year.

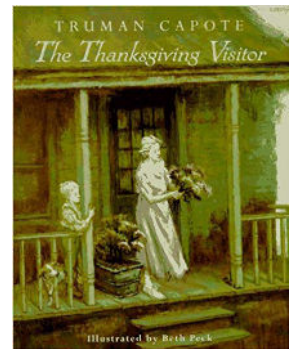
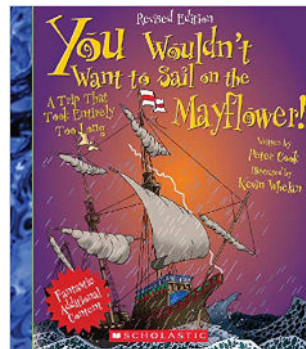
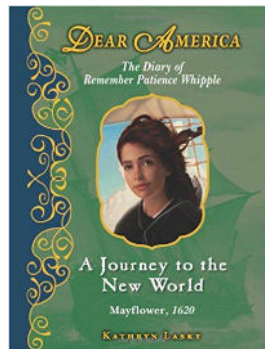
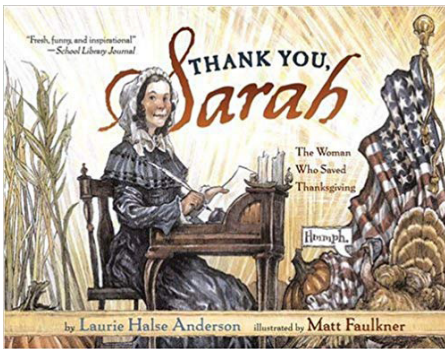
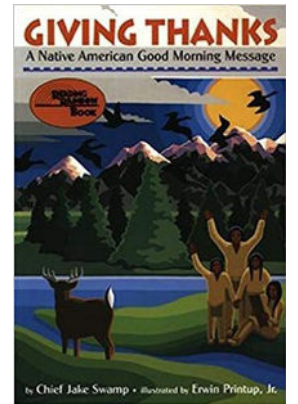
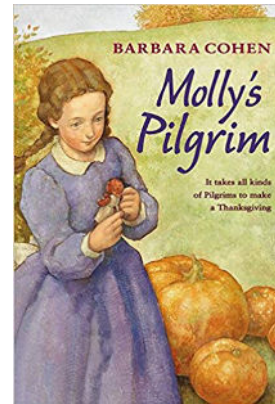
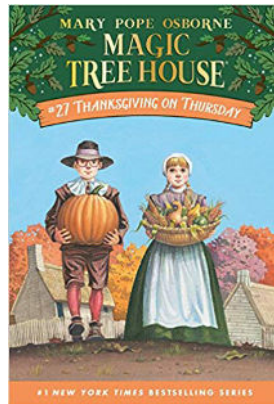
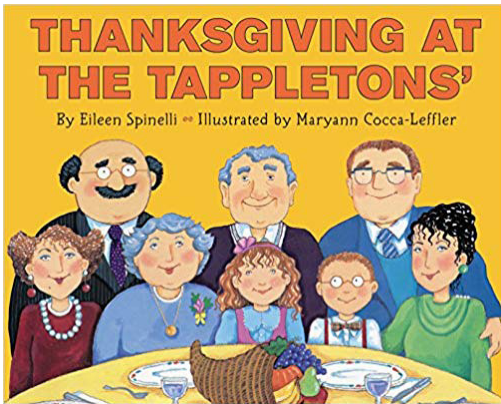
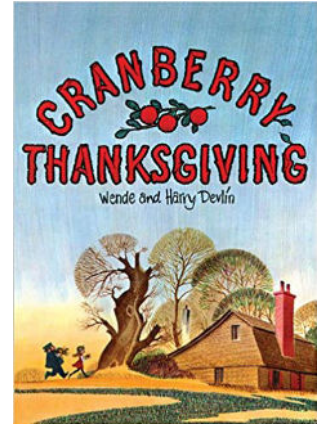
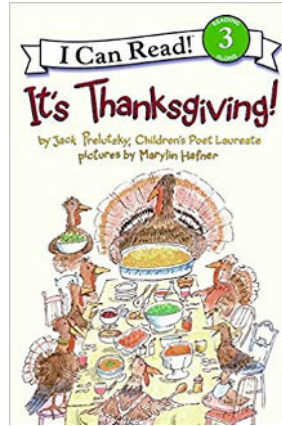
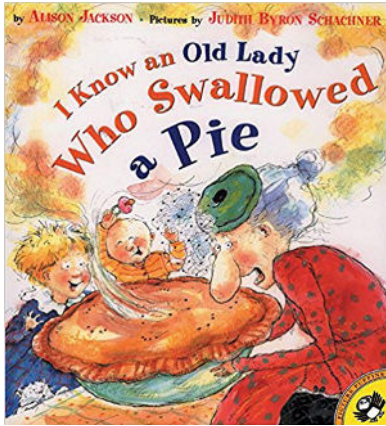


Thanksgiving Dinner illustration

The one who really deserves the credit for establishing Thanksgiving as a national holiday is Sarah Josepha Hale, editor of the popular *Ladies Magazine* and *Godey’s Lady’s Book* (and author of the poem, “Mary Had a Little Lamb”). She began to advocate for a national Thanksgiving celebration in 1827 by printing articles, stories, and recipes in these magazines, as well as writing to governors, senators, and presidents. In 1863 she finally succeeded. Believing her idea that a national day of Thanksgiving might help unite the war-torn country, President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed that November 26 would be Thanksgiving Day, to be observed every year on the fourth Thursday of November. Each year, a president still had to proclaim Thanksgiving, but the fourth Thursday in November became the widely recognized date. In 1941, the fourth Thursday of November was officially set by a Congressional Joint Resolution as a national holiday for Thanksgiving.

Although there are regional variations, the traditional Thanksgiving menu of roasted turkey, cranberries, root vegetables, and pumpkin pie comes from the autumn harvests of New England. Food is a focal point of the celebration, but at the heart of this holiday is the gathering together of family and friends to express our gratitude for our blessings and for each other.





*parents + educators:*

**PLEASE PREVIEW ALL MATERIALS BEFORE SHARING WITH YOUR CHILD**

You are the best judge of what is appropriate for your child(ren) and what they will enjoy. Try checking [goodreads.com](http://goodreads.com) for reviews.

**SEE NEXT PAGE FOR DETAILS + MORE**

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>AUTHOR</b>	<b>LEVEL</b>
<i>Thanksgiving is for Giving Thanks</i>	Margaret Sutherland	PreK-K
<i>Thanks for Thanksgiving</i>	Julie Markes	PreK-Pri
<i>The Pilgrims' First Thanksgiving</i>	Ann McGovern	PreK-Pri
<i>The Story of the Pilgrims</i>	Katharine Ross	PreK-Pri
<i>I Know an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Pie</i>	Alison Jackson	PreK-Pri
<i>A Turkey for Thanksgiving</i>	Eve Bunting	PreK-Pri
<i>Seed, Sprout, Pumpkin, Pie</i>	Jill Esbaum	PreK-Pri
<i>It's Thanksgiving! (Poems)</i>	Jack Prelutsky	PreK-Pri
<i>Over the River and Through the Woods</i>	John Steven Gurney	PreK-Int
<i>Cranberry Thanksgiving</i>	Wende and Harry Devlin	PreK-Int
<i>Thanksgiving at the Tappletons'</i>	Eileen Spinelli	PreK-Int
<i>On the Mayflower</i>	Kate Waters	PreK-Int
<i>Sarah Morton's Day: A Day in the Life of a Pilgrim Girl</i>	Kate Waters	PreK-Int
<i>Samuel Eaton's Day: A Day in the Life of a Pilgrim Boy</i>	Kate Waters	PreK-Int
<i>Tapenum's Day: A Wampanoag Indian Boy in Pilgrim Times</i>	Kate Waters	PreK-Int
<i>Thanksgiving on Thursday (Magic Tree House)</i>	Mary Pope Osborne	K-Int
<i>Molly's Pilgrim</i>	Barbara Cohen	K-Int
<i>Giving Thanks: A Native American Good Morning Message</i>	Chief Jake Swamp	K-Int
<i>Thanksgiving on Plymouth Plantation</i>	Diane Stanley	K-Int
<i>Thank You, Sarah: The Woman Who Saved Thanksgiving</i>	Laurie Halse Anderson	K-Int
<i>Pardon that Turkey!</i>	Susan Sloate	Pri-Int
<i>Three Young Pilgrims</i>	Cheryl Harness	Pri-LMS
<i>Pilgrims of Plymouth</i>	Susan E. Goodman	Pri-LMS
<i>If You Sailed on the Mayflower in 1620</i>	Ann McGovern	Pri-LMS

**TITLE**

**AUTHOR**

**LEVEL**

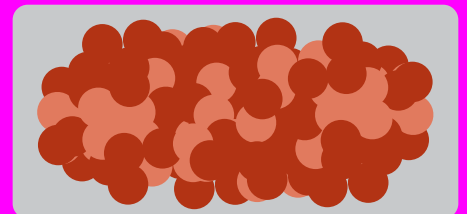
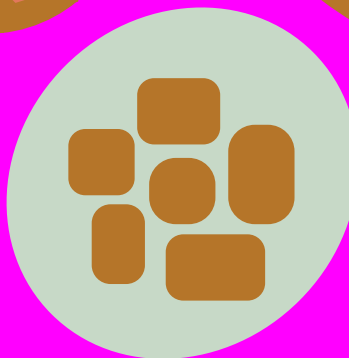
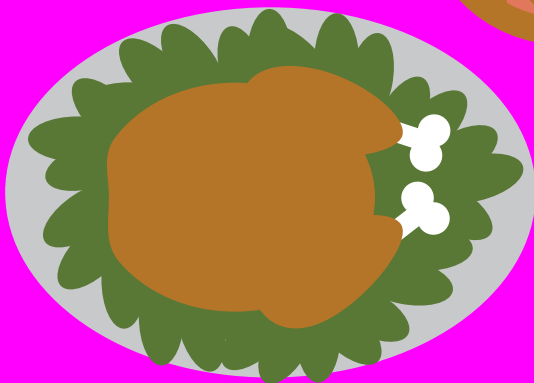
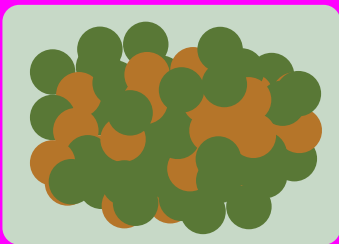
*Dear America: A Journey to the New World*  
*1621: A New Look at Thanksgiving*  
*You Wouldn't Want to Sail on the Mayflower*  
*An Old-Fashioned Thanksgiving*  
*The Thanksgiving Visitor*

Kathryn Lasky  
Catherine O'Neill  
Grace Peter Cook  
Louisa May Alcott  
Truman Capote

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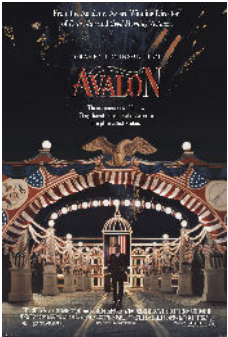
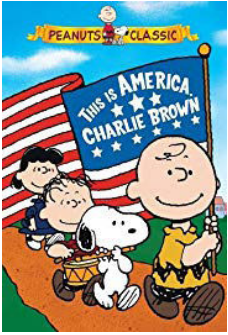
*I am grateful  
for what I have.  
My thanksgiving  
is perpetual.*

HENRY DAVID THOREAU





# AUDIO + VIDEO



- “American as Pumpkin Pie, A History of Thanksgiving” (a podcast from *Backstory Radio with the American History Guys*)
- *This is America, Charlie Brown-The Mayflower Voyagers* (PreK+)
- *A Charlie Brown Thanksgiving* (PreK+)
- *The Mouse on the Mayflower* (PreK+)
- *The True Story of the First Thanksgiving*: PBS documentary (Intermediate+)
- *Thanksgiving Shared: Native Americans*, a 16-minute documentary (Intermediate +)
- *Squanto: A Warrior’s Tale* (Primary+)
- *Free Birds* (PreK+)
- *Miracle on 34th Street* (Primary+)
- *An Old Fashioned Thanksgiving* (Intermediate+)
- *Holiday Family Classics: The Thanksgiving Treasure/The House Without A Christmas Tree* (Intermediate+)
- *Avalon*
- *Dutch*
- *Home for the Holidays*
- *Pieces of April*
- *The Blind Side*
- *Planes, Trains and Automobiles*

Common Sense Media

Down Home's two blog posts about the Pilgrims and Thanksgiving: [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#)

[Gratitude Activities](#)

[Plimouth Plantation Virtual Field Trips](#)

[Thanksgiving Village Printable Crafts and Activities](#)

[Native American Dice](#)

[Thanksgiving Games](#)

[Thanksgiving No-Bake Turkey Cookies](#)

[Thanksgiving Preschool Printables](#)

[Play Plymouth Village](#)

[Gourd Guys](#)

[Pilgrim and Native American Stick Puppets](#)


[DLTK's Thanksgiving Crafts and Children's Activities](#)

[10 Thanksgiving Crafts for Kids](#)

[Pumpkin Pie Play Dough Recipe](#)

[Thanksgiving Then and Now Printable](#)

[Cranberry Thanksgiving Activities](#)



*what are you  
grateful for  
this year?*

[Thanksgiving Interactive](#)

[American Turkey Facts and Printables](#)

[Online Harvest Word Search](#)

[Thanksgiving Crossword Puzzles](#)

[Make a Gratitude Tree](#)

[Gratitude Magnets Craft](#)

[Detailed Thanksgiving History](#)

[Primary Sources for the events of 1621  
and the First Thanksgiving](#)

[Washington's Thanksgiving Proclamation](#)

[Lincoln's Proclamation establishing  
Thanksgiving Day](#)

[11 Family Activities for Thanksgiving Day](#)

[Thanksgiving Recipes from America's Past](#)

[Adult Thanksgiving Coloring Pages](#)