

History of Thanksgiving



Thanksgiving Day is a holiday that is celebrated each year in America. Most people think of turkey, family, and football when they think of Thanksgiving. Stores sell lots of food for the day. People come together and share the food. They play games, watch football, and go to parades.

This holiday started out differently, though. It started four hundred years ago. In 1620, people called Pilgrims left England on a ship named the Mayflower. They were sailing to what they called the "New World" or the American colonies. There were just over 100 Pilgrims on the ship.

When they arrived at the New World, it was winter. There were no houses, stores, or shelters, so the people stayed on the ship throughout the winter.

Living on the ship was hard. There wasn't enough food. Many Pilgrims became sick. Half of them died.

When spring came, the Pilgrims left the ship. They were greeted by a friendly Native Indian named Squanto. He spoke English, and he helped the Pilgrims. He showed them how to find food in the New World. He also introduced them to a local Indian tribe called the Wampanoags.

The Pilgrims and Native Indians lived together in peace. It was now 1621, and

History of Thanksgiving

they worked throughout the months to bring in a successful harvest that fall. When they finished, they celebrated with a feast.

It is this feast that many people call the first Thanksgiving Day. It was a day the Pilgrims and Indians gave thanks for all they had received.

While today many people eat turkey, potatoes, cranberries, and pie for Thanksgiving, in 1621 their menu was different. Based on diaries and letters from the Pilgrims, the people ate duck, deer, shellfish, corn, and other foods.

The feast lasted three days. Besides eating, the Pilgrims and Indians also played games. The next year, the Pilgrims met again to have a second feast. Then over the next two hundred years, many Thanksgiving feasts had been held. However, the feasts happened on different days and times.

It wasn't until 1863, when Abraham Lincoln was president, that Thanksgiving Day was set as a national holiday. It was to be held on the last Thursday of November. Then in 1942, President Franklin Roosevelt changed it to the fourth Thursday of November. That is the day it is observed today.

Over the last seventy-five years, many traditions have changed. However, a few things have stayed the same. It is a day when many people make time to be thankful for the things they have and come together to spend time as friends and family.

History of Thanksgiving

1) Based on the text, which sentence is more likely to be true?
Besides eating, the Pilgrims and Indians also played games.

- a) Playing and eating were equally important.
- b) More time was dedicated to playing than eating.
- c) Eating was the main thing they did, but they also played.

2) Which detail is not mentioned in the text?

- a) Many Thanksgiving traditions have changed over the last seventy-five years.
- b) The tradition of people making time to show gratitude for what they have remains the same.
- c) Thanksgiving traditions are likely to continue to change in the years to come.

3) Fill in the blanks with not more than one word.

Squanto, the Native Indian who greeted the Pilgrims, was _____ .

His _____ skills meant that he was _____ . _____

showing them how to find food, he introduced them to an Indian tribe.

4) What is the spirit of Thanksgiving Day?

History of Thanksgiving

- 5) Which conjunction best completes the sentence?
_____ many things have changed about Thanksgiving, a few still remain unchanged.
- a) Because
 - b) By the time
 - c) Although