

THANKSGIVING

Lexile 500–600

Thanksgiving is a holiday in the United States and Canada. People **celebrate** this holiday in the fall each year. Celebrate means enjoying a special day. People celebrate in different ways. They also celebrate on different days. People in the United States celebrate on the fourth Thursday of November. People in Canada celebrate on the second Monday in October.

Thanksgiving is a day for being **grateful**. When you are grateful, you are thankful for what you have. People can be grateful for their families and friends or the food they eat. Most people like to have a **feast** on Thanksgiving. A feast is a big meal. In the United States, most people like to eat turkey.

Many people think about history on Thanksgiving. Some of the first **settlers** from England had a feast on the first Thanksgiving. Settlers are people who move to live in a new place. Native Americans who already lived there also had a feast.

Background

A group of people called the Pilgrims had the first Thanksgiving. The Pilgrims lived in England. They came to America to find freedom to live as they wanted. They settled at a place called Plymouth in 1620. Plymouth is in what is now the state of Massachusetts.

The Pilgrims built homes and tried to find and grow food. They also made friends with Native Americans who already lived in that area. By the fall of 1621, the Pilgrims had done well. They had grown many **crops** that year. Crops are plant foods grown on farms. The Pilgrims wanted to celebrate. They wanted to show their thanks for their homes and food in the new land.

The First Thanksgiving

The Pilgrims decided to have a feast. This was the first Thanksgiving. Today most people eat turkey on Thanksgiving. The Pilgrims probably ate duck instead. Ducks were easier to find than turkeys. They also ate fish, cabbage, squash, and **porridge** made of corn. Porridge is a soft warm food like oatmeal.

The Native Americans in the area were called the Wampanoag. These people helped the Pilgrims in many ways. They helped keep them alive in difficult times. So the Wampanoag people joined the feast to celebrate. They also brought **venison**. Venison is deer meat.

The Pilgrims and the Native Americans ate and talked for days. They became good friends. Adults talked, sang, and danced. Children played games together. It was a good time in Plymouth. Sadly, many things would go wrong later. But the memory of the first Thanksgiving still made people want to celebrate.

Thanksgiving in the United States Today

Over time, Thanksgiving became more and more popular. Many people celebrated it each year. Nobody agreed on when or how to celebrate it, however. At last in 1863, President Abraham Lincoln made it a **national** holiday. National means shared by a whole country. In 1863, the country was having the Civil War. Lincoln felt people needed a happy day in this terrible time.

People in the United States loved Thanksgiving. It was a great time for families to come together and visit. They could eat tasty food like turkey, stuffing, potatoes, and pie. They could think about the history of their country. They could also think about all the things they are grateful for.

Many other events began taking place around Thanksgiving. Many sports teams play on or near the holiday. Some cities hold Thanksgiving parades. The biggest is the Macy's parade in New York City. At this parade, people pull huge balloons through the streets. Many people in the United States also like to shop around Thanksgiving. People start shopping for presents for the holidays in December.



Courtesy pixabay.com.

Thanksgiving in Canada

Canada also celebrates Thanksgiving. Their holiday is different from the holiday in the United States. It takes place much earlier in the fall. Canadian Thanksgiving takes place on the second Monday in October. Thanksgiving in the United States takes place on the fourth Thursday of November. Canada celebrates sooner because its **harvest** happens sooner. A harvest is the time when farmers pick their crops.

Canada did not have Pilgrims. They did have many Native Americans. Native Americans celebrated their harvests in the fall. So did later settlers who came to Canada from Europe. Canadians remember these long-ago people at Thanksgiving time.

In Canada, people like having feasts with family and friends. They do not celebrate as much as people in the United States, though. Mostly they like to relax or spend the weekend having fun. They also do not shop or have parades like people in the United States. But they still enjoy their holiday very much.

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■ By Mark Dziak

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COMPREHENSION TEST

Multiple-Choice Questions

1. What do people in the United States and Canada do on Thanksgiving?

- A. eat large meals
 - B. watch sports
 - C. go shopping
 - D. hold big parades
-

2. The Pilgrims wanted a special day to

- A. build homes.
 - B. hunt ducks.
 - C. move away.
 - D. give thanks.
-

3. What did Abraham Lincoln do?

- A. settle in Plymouth
 - B. have the first Thanksgiving
 - C. make Thanksgiving a holiday
 - D. start the Macy's parade
-

Fill-in-the-Blank Questions

4. Farmers pick their crops in the fall at _____ time.

5. Something that happens everywhere in a country is _____.

6. People feel happy and _____ when good things happen.

COMPREHENSION TEST ANSWERS

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C. make Thanksgiving a holiday

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Fill-in-the-Blank Questions

4. Farmers pick their crops in the fall at **harvest** time.

5. Something that happens everywhere in a country is **national**.

6. People feel happy and **grateful** when good things happen.