

Origins of America's Thanksgiving Holiday

VOCABULARY WORDS

1. **explorer** (noun) /ɪk'splɔːrər/ – A person who travels to places where no one has ever been before.
Example: The Spanish explorer traveled through the desert to find new lands.
2. **harvest** (noun) /'hɑːvɪst/ – The time of year when crops are cut and collected from fields.
Example: After a long summer, the farmers celebrated a very successful corn harvest.
3. **tribe** (noun) /traɪb/ – A group of people with the same language and culture living together.
Example: The local tribe taught the new visitors how to grow food in the rocky soil.
4. **official** (adjective) /ə'fɪʃ.əl/ – Agreed to or started by a person in a position of power.
Example: Thanksgiving became an official holiday after the president signed a new law.
5. **feast** (noun) /fiːst/ – A large, special meal for many people to celebrate something.
Example: The family prepared a giant feast with turkey and cake for the party.
6. **colonist** (noun) /'kɒl.ə.nɪst/ – A person who goes to live in a new country that is controlled by their own country.
Example: The first English colonists built small houses and started farms in America.
7. **celebrate** (verb) /'sel.ə.breɪt/ – To do something special for an important event or holiday.
Example: Most American families celebrate Thanksgiving by eating a big dinner together.



Thanksgiving is a very big holiday in the United States every year. Many different countries celebrate it, but the American story is very old. No one is completely sure when the very first Thanksgiving happened. Some people believe it started in 1541 with a group of Spanish explorers. These men had a large feast in Texas to pray and say thank you. There were other early feasts in the 1500s and early 1600s. In 1598, another group of people

shared a meal after traveling through a hot desert. Other special meals happened in Florida and Maine between Europeans and Native Americans. However, most people today think of a meal from 1621. This famous event took place in a town called Plymouth, Massachusetts.

In 1621, English colonists wanted to celebrate their first successful harvest. Members of the Wampanoag tribe helped them learn how to grow food. They decided to eat together to show their friendship and thanks. This famous celebration was not just one meal; it lasted for three days. It is the most popular story about the beginning of the holiday.

Many years later, George Washington asked Americans to have days of thanks. He did this after winning important battles during a long war. However, the holiday was not yet a permanent event on the calendar. In 1863, President Abraham Lincoln finally made Thanksgiving an official national holiday. From that point on, it became a regular part of American life.

Today, American families meet on the fourth Thursday of November. They usually eat a traditional dinner that includes turkey and pumpkin pie. It is a time for people to stay home and be with their relatives. Many people also watch parades or American football on television. It remains one of the most important days for travel in the country.

DISCUSSION

1. If you had to eat the same traditional meal every year for the rest of your life, what would be on your plate?
2. The Wampanoag tribe helped the colonists survive. If you moved to a new planet, what is the first thing you would ask a local "alien" to teach you?
3. Thanksgiving lasted three days in 1621. If you could make any holiday three days long, which one would you choose and why?
4. Americans eat turkey, but some people find it boring. What is a "crazy" food you would suggest as a new Thanksgiving tradition?
5. Imagine you are a colonist in 1621 meeting a Native American for the first time—how would you say "thank you" without using words?
6. Is it more important to celebrate the history of a holiday or just use the day to relax with your family?
7. If you could go back in time to the 1541 feast in Texas, what modern snack would you bring to share with the explorers?