

Thanksgiving

Pre-Reading

A. Warm-Up Questions

1. Do you know the history behind Thanksgiving?
What do you know? What do you want to know?
2. What is harvest season and when is it in your native country?
3. What do harvest festivals have in common?
4. What are you thankful for right now?



B. Vocabulary Preview

Match up as many words and meanings as you can.

Check this exercise again after seeing the words in context on pages 2-3.

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| ___ 1. honor | a) hunger, not enough food |
| ___ 2. harvest | b) fall, the season between summer and winter |
| ___ 3. lunar | c) a small house or shelter |
| ___ 4. autumn | d) to make more beautiful |
| ___ 5. hut | e) sickness, illness |
| ___ 6. wander | f) to show respect for |
| ___ 7. decorate | g) a family member from long ago |
| ___ 8. ancestor | h) to go from place to place |
| ___ 9. settler | i) a person who starts to live in a new place |
| ___ 10. colony | j) food gathered from the land, such as grains and vegetables |
| ___ 11. starvation | k) a new region settled by people from another country |
| ___ 12. disease | l) of the moon |



Reading

1. Harvest festivals and thanksgiving celebrations have been held throughout the world for thousands of years. The ancient Greeks held a three-day festival every autumn to **honor** Demeter, their goddess of grain. The Romans also held a fall festival honoring their goddess of corn, Ceres. This celebration included music, games, parades and a thanksgiving feast. The ancient Egyptians honored their god of vegetation, Min, with a **harvest** festival as well. Like the Romans, the Egyptians partied with music, dancing, and sports.
2. The ancient Chinese celebrated a harvest festival called Chung Ch'ui. This holiday fell on the fifteenth day of the eighth month in the **lunar** calendar. Still today, Chinese all over the world remember this special festival by baking round, yellow "moon" cakes to symbolize the beautiful, full moon. The **autumn** festival of Sukkoth, celebrated by the ancient Hebrew people, is still celebrated today by Jewish families around the world. Sukkoth is named for the **huts** or sukkahs that people lived in as they **wandered** through the desert. These small huts were built of branches and could be easily put together and taken apart. Today, many Jewish families build symbolic huts and **decorate** them with fruit and vegetables and eat their evening meal under the stars, remembering their **ancestors'** harvest celebrations of long ago.
3. Thanksgiving ceremonies were held in North America by the Native American people long before the arrival of European **settlers**. Like other cultures around the world, the Natives showed thanks for their harvests by singing, dancing, and praying. The American Thanksgiving holiday that we know today began in the early days of the American **colonies** almost 400 years ago. In 1620, a group of about 100 people left England looking for religious freedom and a better life in America. This group of people, called the Pilgrims, had wanted to separate from the Church of England and start their own church in the New World. When they arrived, their first winter was very difficult, and many of them died from **starvation** and **disease**.





Reading cont.

4. The following year, a group of Native Americans began to teach the settlers many things about survival in their new land. They taught them how to grow corn and other crops in the unfamiliar soil, how to collect sap from the maple trees to make syrup, how to gather wild rice, and how to collect berries. They also taught them how to fish and hunt. In 1621, the Pilgrims had a very successful harvest, and they were able to put away food for the long winter ahead. That year, the colonists had a lot to be thankful for, so they planned a large feast and celebrated for three days. They invited the Natives to their celebration because they had taught them so much about how to live in America. In the following years, the colonists continued to celebrate their harvest with a feast of thanks. In 1863, President Abraham Lincoln declared Thanksgiving to be a national holiday. Although the original Thanksgiving feast occurred sometime in late October, now Americans celebrate the fourth Thursday in November as their official Thanksgiving Day.
5. Canadians share many thanksgiving traditions with their neighbors to the south. In fact, the first known North American celebration of thanksgiving by Europeans took place in Newfoundland, Canada. The English settlers, led by the explorer Martin Frobisher, held a traditional British harvest feast in the year 1578. For many years after, Canadians continued to hold thanksgiving celebrations whenever they had a good reason to rejoice. Sometimes they celebrated because of a military victory; other times it was recovery from illness. In 1870, the Canadian government decided to officially mark a day of thanksgiving. Because the growing season is shorter in Canada and the harvest comes earlier, Canadians celebrate Thanksgiving earlier than Americans. Since 1957, Canadian Thanksgiving Day has been held on the second Monday in October.
6. In both Canada and the United States, Thanksgiving is a time to spend with family and friends. It is a day to stop working and to give thanks for one's life, health, family, food, and freedom. Some people spend time praying in their churches while others spend the day relaxing at home. Most families share a festive meal together with traditional dishes such as turkey and stuffing, mashed potatoes, squash or turnips, cranberry sauce, and, of course, the traditional pumpkin pie for dessert.



Comprehension

A. Matching

Match the people on the left with something related to their harvest festival.

- | | | |
|----------|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| _____ 1. | ancient Greeks | a) fourth Thursday in November |
| _____ 2. | Canadians | b) moon festival |
| _____ 3. | ancient Egyptians | c) Ceres |
| _____ 4. | ancient Hebrews | d) Min |
| _____ 5. | Romans | e) second Monday in October |
| _____ 6. | Chinese | f) Sukkoth |
| _____ 7. | Americans | g) Demeter |

B. Ask & Answer

Practice asking and answering the following questions with your partner. Then write your answers in your notebook.

- Who did the ancient Greeks honor during their three-day autumn festival?
- Why do the Chinese eat yellow, round cakes on the fifteenth day of the eighth month of the lunar calendar?
- Who celebrates the holiday of Sukkoth?
- Who was Min?
- How did Native Americans celebrate their harvest festivals?
- Why did the Pilgrims leave England?
- How did the new American settlers learn to survive in their new land?
- Why is Canadian Thanksgiving earlier than American Thanksgiving?
- How do Canadians and Americans spend Thanksgiving Day?
- Describe a traditional Thanksgiving meal in Canada or the United States.
- Do you have a day of thanksgiving in your country? If so, describe it.
- What is your favorite holiday in your country? What are the customs and traditional foods associated with this holiday?



Vocabulary Review

A. Choose the Correct Word

Circle the word or phrase with the closest meaning to the underlined word.

- | | | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| 1. <u>gather</u> | 3. <u>crop</u> | 5. <u>ancient</u> | 7. <u>soil</u> |
| a) understand | a) plant | a) new | a) vegetables |
| b) live | b) fish | b) usual | b) plant |
| c) collect | c) find | c) old | c) dirt |
| d) fight | d) animal | d) happy | d) water |
| 2. <u>sap</u> | 4. <u>survive</u> | 6. <u>tradition</u> | |
| a) bird | a) travel | a) lake | |
| b) hunt | b) live | b) custom | |
| c) egg | c) die | c) costume | |
| d) liquid from a tree | d) study | d) unusual | |

B. Odd One Out

Circle the word or expression that does not belong.

- | | | | | |
|----------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|------------------|
| 1. a) feast | 2. a) turkey | 3. a) occur | 4. a) victory | 5. a) unfamiliar |
| b) celebration | b) goose | b) find | b) failure | b) strange |
| c) study | c) beef | c) happen | c) success | c) same |
| d) meal | d) chicken | d) take place | d) winning | d) different |



Pair Work (Student A)

A. Sharing Information

You and your partner each have two short readings about some of the symbols of Thanksgiving. Share your information with your partner.

Cranberry Sauce

Cranberry sauce is traditionally eaten with turkey at the Thanksgiving meal. Cranberry sauce or cranberry jelly was on the first thanksgiving table hundreds of years ago and is still served today. A cranberry is a small, sour, red berry that grows in soft, wet ground called bogs. The Native Americans used cranberries as medicine to treat infections. They also used the red juice of the cranberries to dye their rugs and blankets. When the early European settlers came to America, the Natives taught them how to cook the berries with water and sweet sap from the trees to make a sauce. The settlers thought that the flower of the cranberry looked like a long-necked bird called a crane, and so they began to call the berry "crane-berry." Cranberries are still grown in North America today and they remain a traditional part of Thanksgiving dinners.

The Cornucopia

One of the most common symbols of Thanksgiving is the cornucopia, which is also called the horn of plenty. The cornucopia is a symbol of the productivity of nature. This symbol originated in ancient Greece.

B. Ask & Answer

Practice asking and answering the following questions with your partner.

1. Where do cranberries grow?
2. Describe a cranberry.
3. What did the Native Americans use cranberries for?
4. How did the early European settlers learn to make cranberry sauce?
5. Where did the name "cranberry" come from?
6. Why did the early settlers not know how to grow pumpkins when they first arrived?
7. What kind of plants did the early European settlers first try to grow?
8. How did the settlers learn to grow squash?
9. Why did the settlers invite the Natives to their first thanksgiving feast?
10. How is the turkey we eat today different from the turkey the early settlers ate?
11. What is another name for cornucopia?
12. Where did the symbol of the cornucopia originate?
13. What did the cornucopia symbolize?
14. What was the original cornucopia made from?
15. How do many people decorate their Thanksgiving tables nowadays?



Pair Work (Student B)

A. Sharing Information

You and your partner each have two short readings about some of the symbols of Thanksgiving. Share your information with your partner.

Pumpkins and Turkey

Pumpkins and other kinds of squash did not grow in the Old World, so the early European settlers had never seen them before they came to America. When the settlers first arrived, they tried to grow the plants they were familiar with, but they did not succeed. The Native Americans introduced the new settlers to the big, new vegetables and showed them how to grow them. The Europeans were very grateful when they had their first successful harvest of pumpkins and squash, and they held a big feast to celebrate. These vegetables have been a Thanksgiving tradition ever since. Squash is usually served with the main course and pumpkin pie remains a favorite for dessert. A turkey is a large North American bird. When the settlers held their first Thanksgiving dinner, they invited the Natives who had taught them how to survive the long, cold winter. The Natives brought deer meat to roast for the meal, as well as fresh wild turkeys. Turkey has been the main course at Thanksgiving dinners since that first celebration. However, the turkeys we eat today are usually farm-raised and are no longer wild.

The Cornucopia

The original cornucopia was a curved goat's horn filled with fruit and grain. Nowadays people often decorate their Thanksgiving tables with horn-shaped baskets filled with fruit and vegetables.

B. Ask & Answer

Practice asking and answering the following questions with your partner.

1. Where do cranberries grow?
2. Describe a cranberry.
3. What did the Native Americans use cranberries for?
4. How did the early European settlers learn to make cranberry sauce?
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Vocabulary, Idioms & Expressions

A. Reference

| Vocabulary, Idiom, or Expression | Definition |
|--|--|
| grateful | thankful |
| appreciative | thankful |
| appreciate | to be thankful, to be grateful |
| show one's gratitude | to show how grateful someone is |
| thank goodness | an expression used to express relief |
| thank heavens | an expression used to express relief |
| thanks a million | thank you very much, thanks a lot |
| thank one's lucky stars | to feel grateful because someone is very lucky |
| count one's blessings | to be very thankful for all that someone has |
| feel stuffed, be stuffed | to feel very full from eating a lot |
| go cold turkey, quit something cold turkey | to quit a habit all at once, not gradually |
| talk turkey | to discuss a deal very seriously |

B. Practice

Choose one of the above words, expressions, or idioms to complete the following sentences.

- If the owner of the business really wants to sell, he will _____.
- I am very _____ to you for all your help.
- Last night he threw a full package of cigarettes in the garbage. He decided to _____.
- You can _____ that a doctor was close by when you had your heart attack.
- Thanksgiving is a day for all of us to _____.
- _____ for everything you have done for me!
- _____ you arrived safely! We were very worried about you.
- I can't eat another thing! I feel _____.



Class Activity

FIND SOMEONE WHO...

Walk around the classroom and ask your classmates questions.
Write your classmate's name on the right if he/she answers "yes."

| # | Find someone who... | Name |
|----|---|------|
| 1 | is planning to have a turkey dinner this Thanksgiving. | |
| 2 | likes pumpkin pie. | |
| 3 | has tried cranberry sauce before. | |
| 4 | has quit something cold turkey. | |
| 5 | can thank his/her lucky stars for something. | |
| 6 | celebrated a harvest or thanksgiving festival in his/her country. | |
| 7 | would rather eat turkey than beef. | |
| 8 | felt very stuffed recently. | |
| 9 | counts his/her blessings. | |
| 10 | is planning to go away this Thanksgiving holiday. | |



Listening

🔊 <http://blog.esllibrary.com/2014/11/20/thanksgiving-intermediate/>

Fill in the blanks as you listen to the recording.

1. Harvest festivals and thanksgiving celebrations have been held throughout the world for thousands of years. The ancient Greeks held a three-day festival every autumn to _____ Demeter, their goddess of grain. The Romans also held a fall festival honoring their goddess of corn, Ceres. This celebration included music, games, parades and a thanksgiving feast. The ancient Egyptians honored their god of vegetation, Min, with a _____ festival as well. Like the Romans, the Egyptians partied with music, dancing, and sports.

2. The ancient Chinese celebrated a harvest festival called Chung Ch'ui. This holiday fell on the fifteenth day of the eighth month in the _____ calendar. Still today, Chinese all over the world remember this special festival by baking round, yellow "moon" cakes to symbolize the beautiful, full moon. The _____ festival of Sukkoth, celebrated by the ancient Hebrew people, is still celebrated today by Jewish families around the world. Sukkoth is named for the huts or sukkahs that people lived in as they wandered through the desert. These small huts were built of branches and could be easily put together and taken apart. Today, many Jewish families build symbolic huts and _____ them with fruit and vegetables and eat their evening meal under the stars, remembering their _____ harvest celebrations of long ago.

3. Thanksgiving ceremonies were held in North America by the Native American people long before the arrival of European _____. Like other cultures around the world, the Natives showed thanks for their harvests by singing, dancing, and praying. The American Thanksgiving holiday that we know today began in the early days of the American _____. almost 400 years ago. In 1620, a group of about 100 people left England looking for religious freedom and a better life in America. This group of people, called the Pilgrims, had wanted to separate from the Church of England and start their own church in the New World. When they arrived, their first winter was very difficult, and many of them died from _____ and _____.





Listening cont.

4. The following year, a group of Native Americans began to teach the settlers many things about _____ in their new land. They taught them how to grow corn and other crops in the unfamiliar soil, how to collect sap from the maple trees to make syrup, how to gather wild rice, and how to collect berries. They also taught them how to fish and hunt. In 1621, the Pilgrims had a very _____ harvest, and they were able to put away food for the long winter ahead. That year, the colonists had a lot to be thankful for, so they planned a large feast and celebrated for three days. They invited the Natives to their celebration because they had taught them so much about how to live in America. In the following years, the colonists continued to celebrate their harvest with a feast of thanks. In 1863, President Abraham Lincoln declared Thanksgiving to be a national holiday. Although the original Thanksgiving feast occurred sometime in late October, now Americans celebrate the fourth Thursday in November as their official Thanksgiving Day.

5. Canadians share many thanksgiving traditions with their neighbors to the south. In fact, the first known North American celebration of thanksgiving by Europeans took place in Newfoundland, Canada. The English settlers, led by the explorer Martin Frobisher, held a traditional British harvest feast in the year 1578. For many years after, Canadians continued to hold thanksgiving celebrations whenever they had a good reason to _____. Sometimes they celebrated because of a military victory; other times it was recovery from illness. In 1870, the Canadian government decided to officially mark a day of thanksgiving. Because the growing season is shorter in Canada and the harvest comes earlier, Canadians celebrate Thanksgiving earlier than Americans. Since _____, Canadian Thanksgiving Day has been held on the second Monday in October.

6. In both Canada and the United States, Thanksgiving is a time to spend with family and friends. It is a day to stop working and to _____ for one's life, health, family, food, and freedom. Some people spend time praying in their churches while others spend the day _____ at home. Most families share a festive meal together with traditional dishes such as turkey and stuffing, mashed potatoes, squash or turnips, cranberry sauce, and, of course, the traditional pumpkin pie for dessert.



Answer Key

LESSON DESCRIPTION:

In this lesson, students read a brief history about the origin of Thanksgiving. Related vocabulary and idioms are introduced.

LEVEL: High Int – Adv

TIME: 2–3 hours

TAGS: holidays, American, Canadian, Thanksgiving, family, history, food, fall, harvest

Introduction to Thanksgiving

You can begin by showing pictures of pumpkins, turkeys, cranberries, Pilgrims, cornucopias, etc. Ask the students to share any information they may already have about Thanksgiving or any similar celebrations they have in their own countries. Talk about harvest times in their countries and typical fall vegetables.

Pre-Reading

A. WARM-UP QUESTIONS

1. In many different cultures, people honored the god of grains or vegetation during harvest time. Answers will vary.
2. Answers will vary.
3. Harvest festivals usually involve a feast and a celebration of family and food. Answers will vary.
4. Answers will vary.

B. VOCABULARY PREVIEW

- | | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|-------|-------|
| 1. f | 3. l | 5. c | 7. d | 9. i | 11. a |
| 2. j | 4. b | 6. h | 8. g | 10. k | 12. e |

Reading (and/or Listening)

Read individually, in small groups, or as a class. You can also play the listening as your students read along. A gap-fill version of the reading is available on pages 10–11. Help your students with vocabulary and expressions that they are unfamiliar with.

Comprehension

After reading the passage, break the students into pairs and have them do the matching exercise on page 4. Then get them to practice asking and answering the comprehension questions on page 4. At the end of the oral practice, have the students write the answers. Review again orally with the whole class.

A. MATCHING

1. g 2. e 3. d 4. f 5. c 6. b 7. a

B. ASK & ANSWER

1. They honored Demeter, their goddess of grain.
2. They eat little round, yellow cakes to symbolize the full moon.
3. Sukkoth is celebrated by Jewish families around the world.
4. Min was the ancient Egyptian god of vegetation.
5. Native Americans celebrated their harvest festivals by singing, dancing, and praying.
6. The Pilgrims left England looking for religious freedom and a better life in America.
7. The settlers learned to survive in their new land thanks to teachings from the Native Americans.
8. Canadians celebrate Thanksgiving earlier because the growing season is shorter and crops are harvested sooner in Canada.
9. They spend the day gathering with family and friends, going to church, relaxing at home, or sharing a festive meal.
10. A traditional meal may include turkey and stuffing, mashed potatoes, squash or turnips, cranberry sauce, and pumpkin pie for dessert.
- 11–12. Individual answers.

(continued on the next page...)



Answer Key cont.

Vocabulary Review

A. CHOOSE THE CORRECT WORD

1. c 2. d 3. a 4. b 5. c 6. b 7. c

C. ODD ONE OUT

1. study 3. find 5. same
2. beef 4. failure

Pair Work

Break the class into pairs. Each student has a different reading about the symbols of Thanksgiving. Have the students read their articles silently and then share the information with their partner by completing the comprehension questions together. Review together with the whole class.

B. ASK & ANSWER

1. Cranberries grow in soft, wet ground called bogs.
2. A cranberry is a small, sour, red berry.
3. They used cranberries as medicine to treat infections and as dye for rugs and blankets.
4. They were taught by the Native Americans.
5. The settlers thought that the flower of the cranberry looked like a long-necked bird called a crane, and so they began to call the berry "crane-berry."
6. They did not know how to grow pumpkins because pumpkins did not grow in the Old World.
7. They tried to grow plants that they were familiar with.
8. The settlers were shown by the Native Americans.
9. The settlers invited the Natives to show them their gratitude.
10. Turkeys today are usually farm-raised and are no longer wild.
11. Another name for the cornucopia is the horn of plenty.
12. It originated in ancient Greece.
13. The cornucopia is a symbol of the productivity of nature.
14. The original cornucopia was made from a goat's horn.
15. People often decorate their tables with horn-shaped baskets filled with fruits and vegetables.

Vocabulary, Idioms & Expressions

A. REFERENCE

The idioms given include words used in the context of Thanksgiving (thanks, turkey, stuffed, etc.). Explain the meanings, use them in context, have the students complete the sentences, and then have them write their own sentences or dialogues using the idioms.

B. PRACTICE

1. talk turkey
2. grateful
3. quit/go cold turkey
4. thank your lucky stars
5. count our blessings
6. Thanks a million
7. Thank goodness / Thank heavens
8. stuffed

(continued on the next page...)



Answer Key cont.

Class Activity

First, have the students write out the questions they will be asking their classmates. Then have the students circulate around the class asking the questions on the sheet. When a student finds a classmate who can answer the question, he/she will then write the student's name on the line and follow up with one more question of his/her own. E.g., "Have you ever eaten cranberry sauce?" If the student answers "yes," the second question might be: "Did you like it?" or "Where did you eat it?" Try to encourage the students to engage in real conversation during this activity. Follow up by sharing the information with the whole class.

Listening

1. honor, harvest
2. lunar, autumn, decorate, ancestors'
3. settlers, colonies, starvation, disease
4. survival, successful
5. rejoice, 1957
6. give thanks, relaxing

SPELLING NOTE:

This lesson shows the American spelling of the words *Honor*, *Neighbor*, *Favorite*, and *Practice*. Most other English-speaking countries spell these words this way: *Honour*, *Neighbour*, *Favourite*, and *Practise* (when used as a verb; *Practice* when used as a noun). Make it a challenge for your students to find these words in the text and see if they know the alternate spellings.