

# THANKSGIVING

This year, THANKSGIVING falls on November 28<sup>th</sup>, which is the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday in the month of November 2019.

THANKSGIVING is a harvest festival, and the largest holiday in the United States. It is celebrated by everyone, because we are all free to give thanks to nature, deities and others as we prefer. In fact, more people travel for THANKSGIVING than for Christmas!

## TRADITIONAL THANKSGIVING

The traditional story of THANKSGIVING is that:

- English settlers came to North America in 1620 and landed at Plymouth Rock in what is now Massachusetts. But when they landed, it was getting close to winter and they didn't have enough food to survive the winter.
- The Native American tribe – the Wampanoag Iroquois tribe – who lived in the area generously shared food and knowledge with the Pilgrims, who managed to survive the winter and thrive thereafter.
- The Pilgrims were very thankful, and it is said that the harvest the following year was bountiful with crops of corn, barley, beans and pumpkins.
- The THANKSGIVING celebration had deer that the Native Americans brought to roast with the turkeys and other wild game offered by the English colonists. Everyone sat together and feasted.

## THANKSGIVING FOODS:

A traditional THANKSGIVING feast these days includes whole roast turkey with stuffing, corn, cranberry sauce, mashed potatoes with gravy, green bean casserole and finally pumpkin pie for dessert, along with whatever visitors bring with them. In fact, THANKSGIVING can be summed up by the 3 Fs – family, food and football.

The meal is traditionally prepared together by family and friends. The turkey is roasted, and the various side dishes prepared. People gather around the dinner table and the meal starts with a prayer, then people take turns giving thanks for their blessings that year, and finally, the eating begins.

## SYMBOLS OF THANKSGIVING:

Turkey, corn (or maize), pumpkins and cranberries are some of the main symbols which represent THANKSGIVING.

## WHY THANKSGIVING ALWAYS FALLS ON A THURSDAY IN NOVEMBER:

President John Adams (2<sup>nd</sup> US president) was the first to make a THANKSGIVING proclamation. But this wasn't an official Federal holiday.

President Abraham Lincoln made THANKSGIVING Day the last Thursday in November using a presidential proclamation. Again, he didn't mean to make this an official Federal holiday.

It was only in 1941 that Congress set the official THANKSGIVING Day – to the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday in November, and made it into an official Federal holiday. This is because only Congress has the power to do that.

## OTHER POINTS OF VIEW:

When Europeans landed in the Americas, they conquered Native American tribes after more than 100 years of war. The natives, who were called “Indians” suffered greatly, and their population went from more than 100 million in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century to less than 1 million people today.

Millions died from war, and from diseases to which they had no immunity, like smallpox, tuberculosis and the plague. Successive British colonial, US Federal and State governments have implemented misguided, often racist, policies against Native Americans that still continue to damage their culture, traditions and communities.

This makes some people uncomfortable celebrating Thanksgiving as a victory of Europeans over the Native Americans. Part of the celebration also has very young children playing parts in school plays that show Native Americans in negative or very one-sided stereotypes.

Every year, there are Native American protests on Thanksgiving, which some have declared a “Day of Mourning”.

[How to support indigenous people \(Native Americans\) on THANKSGIVING](https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/zmdmb8/how-to-celebrate-thanksgiving-on-stolen-land)

([https://www.vice.com/en\\_us/article/zmdmb8/how-to-celebrate-thanksgiving-on-stolen-land](https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/zmdmb8/how-to-celebrate-thanksgiving-on-stolen-land))

[THANKSGIVING: A Day of Mourning](http://americanindiansource.com/mourningday.html) (<http://americanindiansource.com/mourningday.html>)



Picture #1: **Traditional Feast**



Picture #2: **Cornucopia**



Picture #3: **Porch Decorations**

## Questions:

What is the name of some harvest & thanksgiving celebrations where you are from?

Some examples of harvest festivals from India are:

Pongal (Tamil Nadu), Lohri (Punjab), Onam & Vishu (Kerala),  
Ugadi (Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana),  
Bhogali Bihu (Assam), Holi & Makar Sankranti (all over India),  
Nabanna (West Bengal), Eid-ul-Azha (Muslims all over India),  
Agera (Catholics in Maharashtra)

What are the traditional foods you eat that day?

How do you decorate your home for harvest or thanksgiving festivals and celebrations?

How do you celebrate family togetherness?

Do you have a day or particular time of year that you celebrate?

What are some unique festivals or celebrations where you live that foster a spirit of togetherness for family, friends, neighborhoods and community?

### **Look at Picture #1: Traditional Thanksgiving meal**

Which of the traditional THANKSGIVING foods can you identify?

### **Look at Picture #2: Cornucopia, or Horn of Plenty**

The Horn of Plenty signifies a never-ending source of food.

Is there a similar concept in your culture, religion or community?

What does this conceptual source of never-ending food look like?

Can you share the story of how it came to be?

### **Look at Picture #3: Thanksgiving Porch Decorations**

What are some decoration items that you can name?

Why do you think they are important?

How are they different from the decorations that you put up traditionally for harvest celebrations?

## Common American Idioms

1. **Be stuffed** – To be full and not be able to eat any more.  
*The meal was absolutely delicious. I'm afraid I can't eat one morsel more. I'm stuffed.*
2. **Go cold turkey** – to suffer from suddenly stopping a bad habit (especially addictions)  
*Many people who attempt to quit smoking do so by going cold turkey rather than by gradually cutting down.*
3. **Count your blessings** – to be grateful for the good things in your life  
*We have a lovely home, healthy children and each other – we should count our blessings.*
4. **Talk turkey** – to discuss a problem in a serious way with a real intention to solve it  
*The politicians need to stop messing around and start talking turkey.*
5. **The Rest Is Gravy** - Anything extra is a nice bonus  
*Let's finish up what we've promised by the deadline. The rest is gravy.*
6. **Hot Potato** - A difficult situation that nobody wants to handle, so it gets passed from one person to another.  
*At Thanksgiving, a hot potato could actually be a hot potato, so be careful (and add butter) before you dig into the potato on your plate!*