

Webquest: Thanksgiving

by Gabrielle Jones

Level: Intermediate

Target age: Teenagers / Young adults

Time needed: Up to 60 minutes

Key skills: Reading, speaking

Materials: One copy of the worksheet per student

Introduction

Thanksgiving is a traditional celebration in America and Canada, held on the fourth Thursday in November and the second Monday in October, respectively. The first Thanksgiving meal took place after Pilgrims from England, who travelled to the New World, celebrated their first successful harvest with the Wampanoag Indians who had taught them how to cultivate their crops. The celebration was made an official annual tradition by President Abraham Lincoln in 1863 during the Civil War.

These activities are designed to inform students about the history of Thanksgiving, the traditions practised today, typical food associated with Thanksgiving and how other cultures celebrate harvest time.

How the activities work

The webquest is designed for students to work from activity to activity. Most tasks require students to compare their answers in pairs or small groups and there is always an element of discussion or interaction involved. Instead of having all students do all activities, you could assign teams one activity each. Once they have completed their activity, the students can then form new teams, with one member of each activity group sharing the information they read.

Warmer

Hand out the worksheet. Ask students to discuss the questions, commenting on what they already know about Thanksgiving. Don't provide any answers at this stage.

Activity 1: The history of Thanksgiving

Ask the students to go to the first weblink and answer the comprehension questions with a partner or in small groups. Check the answers as a whole class. Then, have a whole-class discussion about whether students celebrate harvest festivals in their own countries.

www.thoughtco.com/celebrate-thanksgiving-day-1829150

Key:

1. in 1620
2. because they had arrived too late to grow many crops and without fresh food, half the colony died from disease
3. The Iroquois Indians taught them how to grow corn (maize), a new food for the colonists. They showed them other crops to grow in the unfamiliar soil and how to hunt and fish.
4. because they had a very successful harvest
5. the local Iroquois chief and 90 members of his tribe
6. deer, turkey, other wild game, cranberries, different kinds of corn and squash dishes, popcorn
7. the fourth Thursday of November, a different date every year

Activity 2: A traditional Thanksgiving meal

Ask the students to go to the weblink and read about the Thanksgiving meal. Students can answer these questions in pairs. At the end of the activity, discuss the answers to the questions as a whole class. Then, discuss whether the students have tried any of the dishes and which ones they would or wouldn't like to try.

www.organicauthority.com/sanctuary/history-of-thanksgiving-table.html

Key:

1. sweet potatoes
2. pecan pie
3. green bean casserole
4. dressing/stuffing
5. cranberry (sauce)

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6. green Jell-O salad
7. turkey
8. pumpkin pie

Activity 3: Thanksgiving traditions

Ask the students to try to answer the questions before they read the information. You could go over their answers as a whole class before they look at the weblink. At the end of the activity, discuss the answers as a whole class and ask the students if the traditions are similar to ones in their own countries.

people.howstuffworks.com/culture-traditions/holidays-other/thanksgiving5.htm

Key:

1. F – Many people watch (American) football.
2. T
3. F – Some people participate in volunteer activities, such as helping out at a soup kitchen or at a shelter.
4. T
5. F – The name is chosen by the public.
6. T

Activity 4: Thanksgiving in other cultures

For this activity, you will need to assign students numbers in each pair. Student 1 should read the sections on the Ancient Greeks and the Romans. Student 2 should read the sections on the Ancient Chinese and the Hebrews. They then complete their table, before explaining the traditions they looked at to their partner.

www.holidays.net/thanksgiving/story.htm

people	god honoured	name of festival	celebrations
Greeks	Demeter, goddess of grains	Thesmophoria	Married women built leafy shelters. People fasted and, then, on the next day, feasted and made offerings to Demeter.

people	god honoured	name of festival	celebrations
Romans	Ceres, goddess of grains	Cerelia	Offerings of the first fruits of the harvest and pigs were made. There was music, parades, games, sports and feasting.
Chinese	–	Chung Ch'ui	People celebrated the birthday of the moon. Thanksgiving meals consisted of roasted pig, fruits and moon cakes.
Hebrews	–	Sukkoth (Hag ha Succot / Hag ha Asif)	People build small huts of branches, hung with fruits and vegetables.

Activity 5: Round-up

Students finish with a short discussion in which they comment on what they have learnt. They can then go on to compare Thanksgiving to traditions and celebrations in their own country.