

Thanksgiving in North America

1. Before reading the following explanation, what do you know about Thanksgiving in Canada and the USA? Now read the following explanation and answer the questions.

The first North American Thanksgiving was celebrated in 1578 when the English navigator, Martin Frobisher, held a formal ceremony in Newfoundland. He did this to give thanks for surviving the long sea journey. Other settlers arrived in Newfoundland, and the tradition was continued by them.

In 1879, the Canadian Parliament declared November 6th a national holiday of Thanksgiving. Over the years this date changed, and on January 31, 1957, Parliament declared the second Monday in October of each year to be "A Day of General Thanksgiving to Almighty God for the bountiful harvest with which Canada has been blessed".

Thanksgiving in the USA is celebrated on the fourth Thursday in November. In 1621, the early pilgrims who had arrived from England the previous year celebrated their first full harvest. Some of the main dishes were pumpkins, fish and turkey. Edward Winslow, one of the first colonists, wrote, "And although it be not always so plentiful, as it was at this time with us, yet by the goodness of God, we are so far from want, that we often wish you partakers of our plenty."

2. What day is Thanksgiving celebrated Canada and the USA? Why do you think they are celebrated on different dates? Which date do you think is the better choice?
3. What similarities are there between the two versions of Thanksgiving?
4. What foods are associated with Thanksgiving? Which of those have you eaten?
5. What are some Thanksgiving traditions that you know about? Do you have a similar festival in your country? What is it called? What are some of the traditions?
6. How do North Americans decorate their homes for Thanksgiving? What are the themes and colours?
7. What do you plan to do on Thanksgiving this year?
8. Have you cooked a turkey? How was it? Who did you share it with?
9. Why do you think people celebrate Thanksgiving Day?
10. What does Thanksgiving mean to you? What are thankful for?
11. Have you ever said, "thank you" to God, or a god?
12. If you had the authority to start a new holiday, what would you call it? When would it be? What would be its purpose? Who would you include?
13. The Bible says, "Oh give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; for His steadfast love endures forever!" Is God real? Is He good? Is He loving? Discuss how the early colonists must have felt and why they would think it was important to thank God.