



# The story of the first Thanksgiving

In **1620**, a group of English Protestants called **Puritans** who wanted to break away from the Church of England because they were persecuted, sailed across the Atlantic Ocean on **The Mayflower** to settle in a "New World." Carrying **101 men, women, and children**, the ship traveled the ocean for 66 days and was supposed to land where New York City is now located. But windy conditions forced the group to cut their trip short and settle at what is now Massachusetts. They became known as "**the Pilgrims**".



Pilgrim Fathers boarding the Mayflower, painting by Bernard Gribble

Many passengers died at sea and many others became sick. They landed on November 21. **Winter was harsh**, extremely cold and the Pilgrims suffered from **hunger and diseases**. They didn't know how to hunt, fish or grow crops. **By the end of winter, 44 Pilgrims had died.**

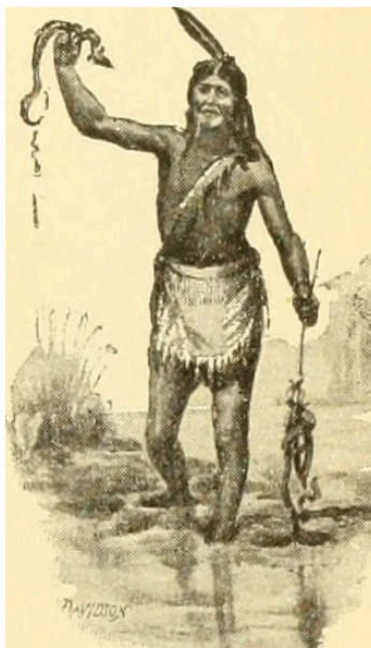


The first winter of the Pilgrims in Massachusetts, 1620: colored engraving, 19th century



**The Pilgrims settled on Wampanoag territory.** The Wampanoag are a Native American people who had lived on that land for over 12,000 years. With the arrival of the European settlers, **many died because of epidemics and firearms fights.**

In **March 1621**, the Wampanoag and the English settlers signed a **peace treaty** which would be honored for the next 50 years. **The Wampanoag taught the Pilgrims how to fish, hunt and grow crops** (such as barley and corn). Communication was made easier thanks to the presence of a Wampanoag man named Squanto who spoke English.



"Squanto" Image from page 68 of "A first book in American history, with special reference to the lives and deeds of great Americans"

To celebrate the first harvest, Governor William Bradford and the other settlers invited the Wampanoag for a **celebratory feast in November 1621**, now remembered as **the first Thanksgiving.**



The "First Thanksgiving", by Jean Leon Gerome Ferris





# Thanksgiving traditions nowadays



Article from EF Academy blog, adapted by S. Le Roux @ Ac. Créteil

**Watching The Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade** is now of the most famous holiday traditions in the United States. In New York City, thousands of people line the streets of Manhattan to watch it. This particular parade is known for its giant inflatable balloons that float between the skyscrapers, high above the onlookers.



## Breaking the wishbone for good luck!

It may sound silly, but this is a real thing! After carving the turkey, the wishbone, a Y-shaped bone that carries much superstition, gets set aside to dry. Once the meal is over, two people make their wishes and break the wishbone. Whoever ends up with the bigger piece is said to have their wish come true and good luck for the upcoming year!



## Eating a traditional Thanksgiving meal with your family.

No Thanksgiving Day would be complete without the traditional meal. Must-eats are: roast turkey, cranberry sauce, stuffing, mashed potatoes and gravy, and sweet potatoes and Brussels sprouts. Completing the meal is, of course, pumpkin pie for dessert.

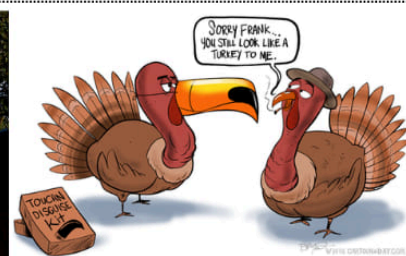


## Sharing what you're most thankful for.

Thanksgiving is a perfect time to reflect on the year alongside family and friends. Whether it's during the meal or while relaxing later in the day, go around the room and share something you're especially grateful for. It's wonderful to hear everyone talk about their favorite moments and experiences from the previous year.



**The presidential turkey pardon** has been a White House tradition for decades. Each November, the president pardons a turkey in front of a crowd at the White House, sparing it from the dinner table and the cruel fate that befalls millions of turkeys during Thanksgiving celebrations.







## Thanksgiving from the Native American perspective

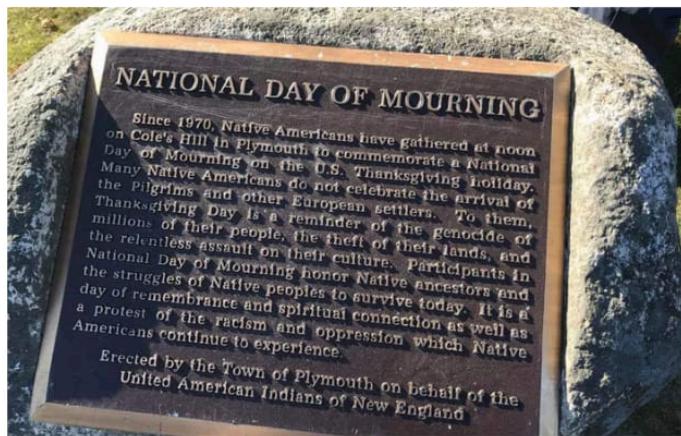
There are always **two sides to a story**. Unfortunately, when it comes to the history of Thanksgiving, generations of Americans have been taught **a one-sided history**. Every year, news outlets and social media are a-buzz with Thanksgiving themes but there is little coverage of the fact that the day after Thanksgiving, known to most as Black Friday, is **Native American Heritage Day**.

To most people Thanksgiving is a frozen memory of peace and generosity. However, shortly after what we now know as the first Thanksgiving, relationships between the European settlers and the Native American tribes drastically changed. Tensions between Plymouth Colony and a coalition of tribes exploded into **a bloody conflict that led to the killing or capture of thousands of Native Americans**. The English settlers also **robbed Wampanoag graves and stole food** from them to survive during their first years on this new continent.

All these reasons explain why Thanksgiving is **a complex holiday** that all Americans should approach with greater sensitivity.

### Thanksgiving VS National Day of Mourning

It's important to know that for many Native Americans, Thanksgiving is **a day of mourning and protest**. To many people "Thanksgiving day is a reminder of **the genocide of millions of Native people, the theft of Native lands, and the relentless assault on Native culture.**"



This plaque was erected by the Town of Plymouth on behalf of the United American Indians of New England.

Participants in National Day of Mourning **honor Native ancestors** and the **struggles of Native peoples to survive today**. It is **a day of remembrance and spiritual connection** as well as **a protest against the racism** and oppression which Native Americans continue to experience.



Plymouth, Massachusetts, November 2019 - Photo: Rachel Jones



Supporters of Native Americans pause following a prayer during the 38th National Day of Mourning at Coles Hill in Plymouth, Mass., on Nov. 22, 2007