

The First Thanksgiving Timeline for Kids

1620 to 1863

Every November, families in the United States share a Thanksgiving meal. The holiday goes back to a harvest feast more than 400 years ago. This timeline tells the story of the Pilgrims, the Wampanoag people, and that feast.



September 1620

The Mayflower Sets Sail

A ship called the Mayflower leaves England with 102 people on board. Many of them are Pilgrims. The trip across the ocean takes 66 days.

Why it matters: The Pilgrims wanted a new home where they could worship in their own way.



November 1620

Land at Last

The Mayflower reaches the coast of what is now Massachusetts. Before going ashore, the men sign a paper. They agree to make fair rules and to follow them.

Why it matters: The paper is called the Mayflower Compact. It was an early step toward people ruling themselves.



Winter of 1620

A Hard Winter

The Pilgrims start to build a village called Plymouth. It is cold, and there is little food. About half of them die before spring.

Why it matters: Those who lived needed help to learn how to live in this new land.



March 1621

A Visitor and a Promise

A man named Samoset walks into the village and greets the Pilgrims in English. Soon the Wampanoag leader, Massasoit, comes to meet them. The two groups promise to live in peace.

Why it matters: The peace between them lasted for more than 50 years.

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April 1621

Squanto Helps

A Wampanoag man named Squanto shows the Pilgrims how to plant corn. He also shows them where to fish and what plants are safe to eat.

Why it matters: Without his help, the Pilgrims might not have had enough food for the next winter.

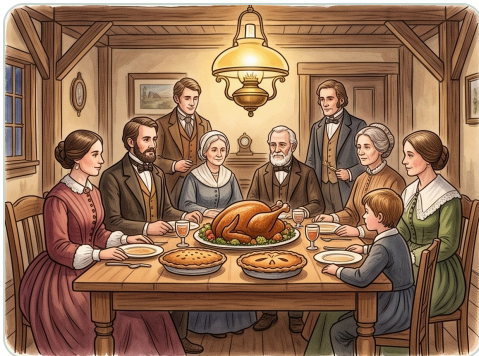


Fall of 1621

The Harvest Feast

The corn grows well. About 50 Pilgrims and 90 Wampanoag men share a feast for three days. They eat deer, wild birds, corn and fish. They also play games.

Why it matters: People remember this feast as the first Thanksgiving.



1863

A National Holiday

President Abraham Lincoln makes Thanksgiving a holiday for the whole country. He asks Americans to give thanks on the last Thursday in November.

Why it matters: Americans have kept Thanksgiving every year since then.

Words to know

Pilgrim: one of the people who came on the Mayflower to start a new home

harvest: the time when crops are picked

feast: a big meal shared by many people

holiday: a special day when people celebrate