

Welcome to Today's Class!

Today's Topic: Thanksgiving: Myths vs Facts

From the American perspective, Thanksgiving is: a holiday about gratitude, family, and sharing. For Native Americans, Thanksgiving is: a day of mourning and a reminder of genocide, displacement, and broken promises. What really happened on that “First Thanksgiving?”

Agenda:

1. Review the video and vocabulary
2. Breakout room discussions
3. Large group wrap-up



The Myth of the First American Thanksgiving



What Really Happened at the 1621 Feast (The “First Thanksgiving”)

- The Pilgrims were celebrating their first successful harvest after a very hard first year.
- The Pilgrims **did not invite** the Wampanoag (Native people) to a feast.
- The Wampanoag came after hearing gunfire, which they thought could signal danger.
- The Wampanoag brought food, including five deer (venison).
- The gathering **was not called “Thanksgiving”** at the time.
- It was not a planned, symbolic event of friendship; it was more of a practical unplanned meeting **during a tense time**.
- The Wampanoag and Pilgrims did cooperate for a short period, but the relationship **deteriorated** in the decades that followed.

Meaning of Thanksgiving

American Perspective

- A holiday focused on gratitude, family, unity, and tradition.
- Represents abundance, hope, and the idea of America as a place of opportunity.
- Many Americans see it as their favorite family holiday—a time to rest, reconnect, and reflect.

Native American Perspective

- A complicated reminder of loss, survival, and a history that is often told incompletely.
- Represents the beginning of centuries of displacement, hardship and genocide for Native Nations.
- Many Native people observe it as a National Day of Mourning or use the day to honor ancestors and teach accurate history.

Watch & Learn

The First Thanksgiving | THE PILGRIMS | American Experience | PBS

Key Vocabulary:

1. pilgrim
2. erecting
3. crude
4. fluff
5. humble
6. recast
7. providences
8. mourning
9. “dipped down into darkness”
10. “The fruit of our labors”



The First Thanksgiving | THE PILGRIMS | American Experience | PBS

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ItrKU0KaoPo>

Let's Talk: Discussion Questions

1. Do you know any holidays from your home culture that have myths or legends attached to them?
2. How can people balance celebrating a holiday while also acknowledging the more difficult parts of history?
3. Should modern Americans celebrate Thanksgiving differently after learning the full history? Why or why not?
4. What responsibility do schools have when teaching historical events?