

Thanksgiving Reading Comprehension Activity

Thanksgiving in Canada

Most researchers cannot agree on the origins of the Canadian Thanksgiving day. The first Canadian Thanksgiving is often traced back to 1578 and the explorer [Martin Frobisher](#). Frobisher, who had been trying to find a way through the Arctic ([northern passage](#)) to the Pacific Ocean, held his Thanksgiving celebration not for harvest but in thanks for surviving the long journey from England through storms and icebergs. On his third and final voyage to the far north, Frobisher held a formal ceremony in [Frobisher Bay](#) in [Baffin Island](#) (present-day [Nunavut](#)) to give thanks to God and celebrated Communion.

The origins of Canadian Thanksgiving are also sometimes traced to the French settlers who came to [New France](#) with explorer [Samuel de Champlain](#) in the early 17th century, who celebrated their successful harvests. The French settlers in the area typically had feasts at the end of the harvest season and continued throughout the winter season, even sharing food with the [indigenous peoples](#) (First Nations) of the area.

As settlers arrived in Canada from New England, late autumn Thanksgiving celebrations became common. New immigrants into the country—such as the Irish, Scottish, and Germans—also added their own traditions to the harvest celebrations. Most of the US aspects of Thanksgiving (such as the turkey), were incorporated when [United Empire Loyalists](#) began to flee from the United States during the [American Revolution](#) and settled in Canada.

Thanksgiving in the United States

In the United States, the modern Thanksgiving holiday tradition is commonly traced to the 1621 celebration at [Plymouth](#) in present-day [Massachusetts](#). The 1621 Plymouth feast and thanksgiving was prompted by a good harvest. [Pilgrims](#) and [Puritans](#) who began emigrating from England in the 1620s and 1630s carried the tradition of Days of Fasting and Days of Thanksgiving with them to [New England](#). Several days of Thanksgiving were held in early New England history that have been identified as the "First Thanksgiving", including Pilgrim holidays in [Plymouth](#) in 1621 and 1623, and a Puritan holiday in [Boston](#) in 1631. In later years, religious thanksgiving services were declared by civil leaders, who planned the colony's thanksgiving celebration and feast in 1623. The practice of holding an annual harvest festival did not become a regular affair in New England until the late 1660s.

Thanksgiving proclamations were made mostly by church leaders in New England up until 1682, and then by both state and church leaders until after the [American Revolution](#). As President of the United States, George Washington proclaimed the first nationwide thanksgiving celebration in America marking November 26, 1789, "as a day of public thanksgiving and prayer to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many and signal favours of Almighty God".

The tradition of the feast and giving thanks still exists today. Thanksgiving is a favoured celebration where friends and family enjoy a holiday and join together to celebrate what they are most thankful for. Some of the traditional foods served at Thanksgiving are: turkey, stuffing, cranberry sauce, and pumpkin pie.

Questions

1. When was the first Canadian Thanksgiving and what was it celebrating?

2. How many trips did Frobisher make to the Arctic and what did he do on his last voyage?

3. Who did the French settlers come to Canada with and what did they celebrate? How long did the celebrations last?

4. In which season did Thanksgiving celebrations became common?

5. How did the addition of new immigrants into the country impact how Canadians celebrate Thanksgiving?

6. Why do Canadians eat turkey for Thanksgiving?

7. When was the first American Thanksgiving and what was it celebrating?

8. When was the first nationwide thanksgiving celebration in America?

9. Describe what is celebrated at Thanksgiving nowadays.

10. Have you celebrated Thanksgiving before? If so please describe what you did. If not, describe a celebration from your culture and what traditions you celebrate.