

Today Is Thanksgiving | Lesson Plan

Why do we celebrate Thanksgiving?

Students will learn the values of Thanksgiving—gratitude, generosity, and family—and why we celebrate this holiday.

Learning Objectives:

- Summarize the events of the first Thanksgiving celebration in 1621.
- Name key figures involved in the history of Thanksgiving.
- Explain why Thanksgiving is an important holiday.
- Identify the values associated with Thanksgiving.

Key Vocabulary:

- **Mayflower:** The ship on which the Pilgrims sailed from England to the New World in 1620.
- **Pilgrim:** One of the bands of Puritans who founded the colony of Plymouth.
- **Squanto:** A Wampanoag man who helped the pilgrims in Plymouth by teaching them agricultural techniques and serving as an interpreter.
- **Harvest:** The act or process of gathering a crop.
- **Grateful:** Appreciative of benefits received; expressing gratitude.

Educational Standards: CCRA.R.7, CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.2, CCRA.L.4, CCRA.SL.4

Academic Topics: America, U.S. Holidays, History

What You'll Need

- Video: *Otto's Tales: Today Is Thanksgiving* (Watch [Here](#))
- Book (Optional): *Otto's Tales: Today Is Thanksgiving* (Purchase [Here](#))
- Worksheet: *Otto's Tales: Today Is Thanksgiving* (Click [Here](#))

Lesson Plan (45 mins.)

Warm-Up: (10 mins.)

1. Begin by discussing Thanksgiving and how the students celebrate. Ask volunteers to share their favorite Thanksgiving dishes and traditions.
2. Introduce the history of the Thanksgiving holiday by giving an overview of the pilgrims who landed at Plymouth and the difficult winter they had. Explain that getting enough food to eat in winter was very challenging and that the indigenous peoples helped the pilgrims learn how to plant food.
3. Queue up the video and let the students know they will learn more about the first Thanksgiving in this Otto's Tales adventure.



Watch and Discuss: (15 mins.)

1. Show the video *Otto's Tales: Today is Thanksgiving*. Guide students' viewing by instructing them to pay attention to the names of three people mentioned in the video.
2. Ask questions to check for understanding:
 - Who were Squanto, Massasoit, and William Bradford?
 - How do we celebrate Thanksgiving today?
 - What is the connection between all the food we eat on Thanksgiving, gratitude, and generosity?
3. After the video, revisit the enduring question: *Why do we celebrate Thanksgiving?*

Wrap-Up: (20 mins.)

1. Distribute individual copies of the "Today Is Thanksgiving Worksheet" and guide students through the following instructions:
 - In the **Calendar Area**, ask students to draw a picture of a Thanksgiving dinner, turkey with colorful feathers, or some other fun holiday image.
 - Have students write the name of the month and fill in the calendar by writing the numbers, starting from the correct day of the week. Remind them that November has 30 days.
 - In the **Month Section**, direct students to read aloud or sing the months of the year song. Then, have them color in the correct month.
 - In the **Seasons Section**, ask students to read aloud the four seasons, then color the appropriate season.
 - In the **Weather Section**, instruct students to circle or color the character that correctly displays today's weather.
 - In the **Telling Time Section**, guide students to write the current time in both analog and digital formats.
 - In the **Temperature Section**, have students color today's temperature.
2. Conclude the lesson by revisiting the key concepts discussed. Reinforce the significance of Thanksgiving by asking students to share one thing they learned about why Thanksgiving is celebrated.

Don't have time for the full lesson? Quick Activity (15 mins.)

Introduce the enduring question: *Why do we celebrate Thanksgiving?* Watch the video *Otto's Tales: Today is Thanksgiving*. After watching the video, ask students to connect gratitude, generosity, and family with the celebration of Thanksgiving. Allow the students to share what they're grateful for.