

# Re-Thinking Thanksgiving: The Complete Story of an American Holiday

## Graphic Organizers

Created to accompany a three-part series of features entitled **Re-Thinking Thanksgiving: The Complete Story of an American Holiday**

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# Re-Thinking Thanksgiving: The Complete Story of an American Holiday

## Graphic Organizers

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**Lesson 1: The “First Thanksgiving” ...or was it?**

**Activity 1 – Know, Learned, Want to Know**

Explain what you know about Thanksgiving before reading the feature and then, what you learned when you read it. Record what you’d like to know in the last column and where you think you might be able to find it. If you do find more information record it on the back of this sheet.

Know	Learned	Want to Know

**Follow up:** Look in your local newspaper (in-print or online) for references to Thanksgiving. Select one example. Based on what you’ve learned, what do you think about it?

**Lesson 1: The “First Thanksgiving” ...or was it?**

**Activity 2 – Modern Tradition vs. Historic Events**

Read the feature and record the comparisons between our current modern traditions or commonly held beliefs about Thanksgiving versus what evidence and reasoning tells us happened in 1621. Can you find any similarities between the two?

Tradition/Believe	Similarities	What Happened in 1621

**Follow up:** Imagine you’re a reporter living during 1621. Write a report of the “First Thanksgiving” as a Pilgrim or a Wampanoag. Compare your report with someone who selected the opposite group.



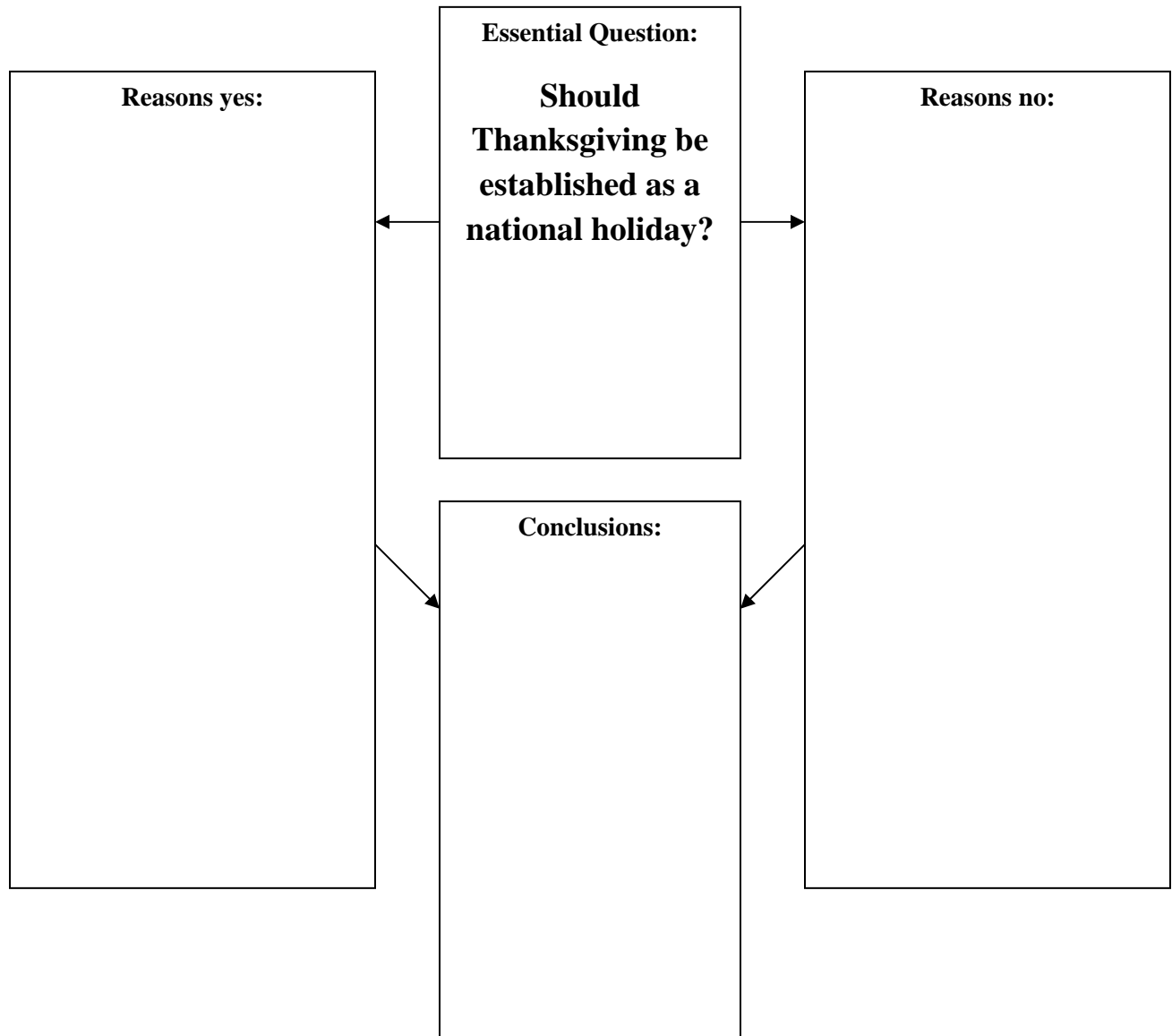


## Lesson 2: Thanksgiving Becomes a Holiday...in December?

### Activity 2 – Writing an Editorial

Pretend you are Sarah Josepha Hale and write an editorial in support of Thanksgiving as a national holiday.

Start with the “essential question” provided. Work in small teams. List reasons you think citizens and leaders would have given for answering “yes” or “no” to the question. After studying the issue thoroughly, have each classmate write and draw conclusions. Each student should write his/her own answer to the question.



**Follow up:** What more do you want to know about the question? Where can you go for more information?

This activity was adapted from one developed for *Community Connections with Geography and the Newspaper* for the NAA Foundation by Dr. Sandra Cook.

## Lesson 2: Thanksgiving Becomes a Holiday...in December?

### Activity 3 – True or False?

1. The annual tradition of Thanksgiving started at Plymouth with the feast in 1621.  
True False
2. The first time the United States, as a new independent nation, celebrated Thanksgiving was in December of 1777.  
True False
3. Reverend Alexander Young declared the harvest celebration in 1621 as the First Thanksgiving in his book “Chronicles of the Pilgrim Fathers.”  
True False
4. The first President to proclaim a national day of Thanksgiving was Abraham Lincoln.  
True False
5. Franklin Delano Roosevelt moved Thanksgiving earlier to help retailers during the Great Depression.  
True False
6. Since 1941, when Congress passed a law declaring Thanksgiving a legal holiday, Thanksgiving is always the last Thursday in November. True False

**Follow up:** Select an interesting story from today’s newspaper. Start with the facts in the story, add some of your own fiction and myth and develop a new holiday for everyone to celebrate in the future. Do you think your new celebration will be accepted by others? Why or why not?



### Lesson 3: Do Native Americans celebrate Thanksgiving?

#### Activity 1 – Know, Learned, Want to Know

Explain what you know about Native Americans before reading the feature and then, what you learned when you read it. Record what you'd like to know in the last column and where you think you might be able to find it. If you do find more information record it on the back of this sheet.

Know	Learned	Want to Know

**Follow up:** Look in your local newspaper (in-print or online) for influences of Native American culture in your community. Select one example. Do you think your example based on fact, fiction or myth? Explain why you think the way you do.

### Lesson 3: Do Native Americans celebrate Thanksgiving?

#### Activity 2 – Traditions and Celebrations

Many people and events contributed to the development of the Thanksgiving traditions we celebrate today. Think of a tradition you have with your family. It may or may not be a Thanksgiving tradition. Briefly describe the people and events that make up your tradition. Share your story with someone else in your class.

<b>People: Who participates?</b>	
<b>Food: What do you eat and drink?</b>	
<b>Activities: What do you do?</b>	
<b>Setting: Location? Inside or outside? Are there special decorations?</b>	
<b>When: What date or time of year does this happen?</b>	
<b>Reason: Why is this a tradition in your family?</b>	

**Follow up:** Look in your local newspaper (in-print or online) for community celebrations. Compare one with your family traditions. Which do you think is better and why?

### Lesson 3: Do Native Americans celebrate Thanksgiving?

#### Activity 3 – Positive and Negative

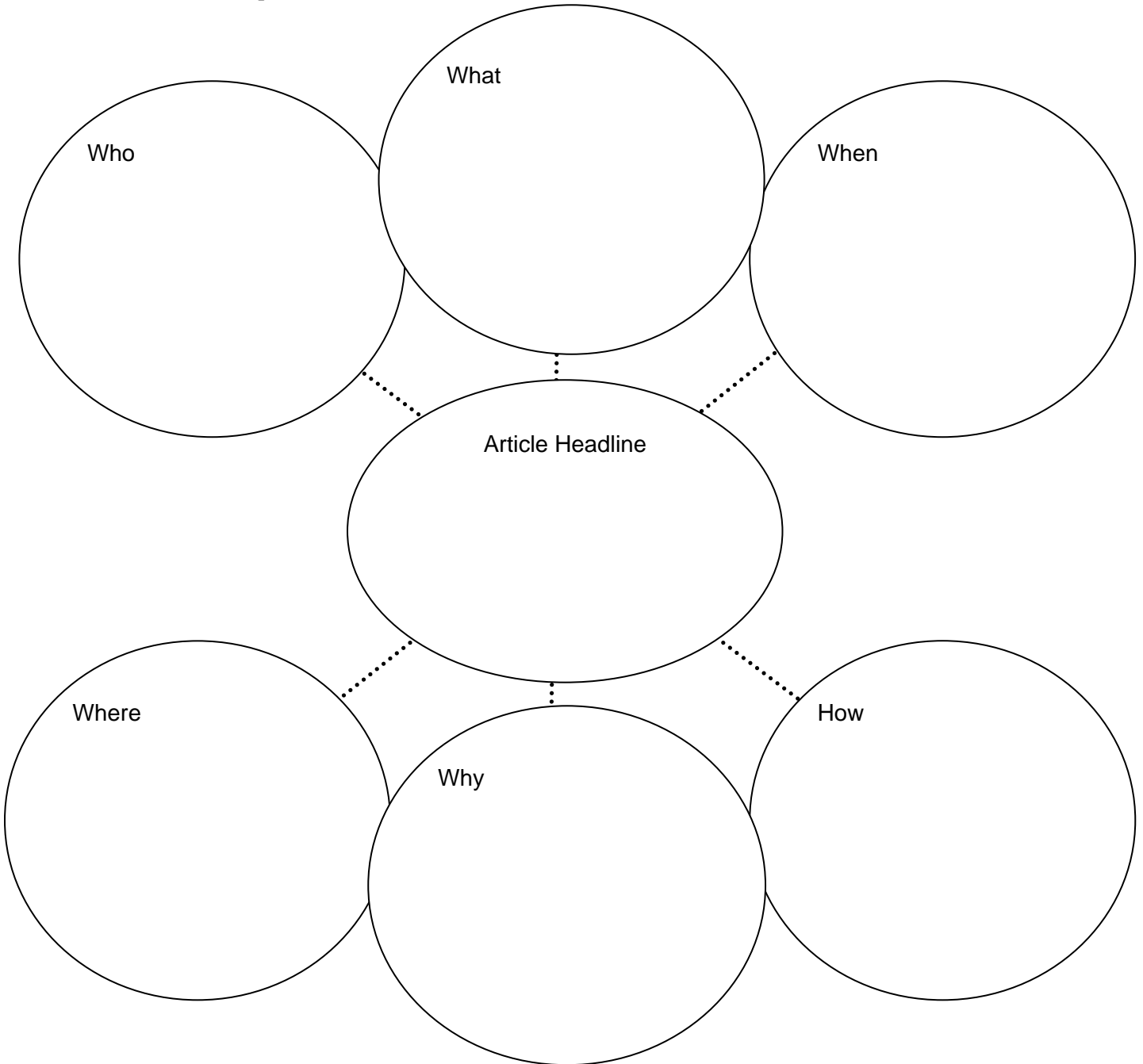
Our Thanksgiving traditions had very positive feelings for most Americans but not all. Taking into consideration the way the Native people were treated between the feast at Plymouth and modern times, it's not too hard to understand why Thanksgiving stirs up negative emotions. Look for a story in the newspaper (print or electronic) that people could have positive and negative feelings about. Describe what you know from the news article below.

	Positive	Negative
Who?		
What?		
When?		
Where?		
Why?		
How?		

**Follow up:** How do you personally feel about this topic? Why?

**Re-Thinking Thanksgiving: The Complete Story of an American Holiday**  
**Who, What, When, Where, Why and How?**

Select one of the three features. Identify the main idea or essential message from the story. Fill out the 5Ws and H in the space below.



**Follow up:** Is the writer’s point of view objective? How do you know this? (Find specific words and phrases.) Are the main points of the article clearly stated?

**Re-Thinking Thanksgiving: The Complete Story of an American Holiday**  
**What I am Thankful For...**

Look through the newspaper for words and images that describe what you are thankful for. Make a collage of the things you've found in the space below.

**Follow up:** Look through the newspaper for individuals or groups of people who are in need. As a class, brainstorm ways your class may be able to help. Select one and do your best to successfully complete it. Helping others can give us all reasons to be thankful.

**Re-Thinking Thanksgiving: The Complete Story of an American Holiday**  
**More Food from Winslow’s Letter**

Read the additional paragraph about the food eaten at the harvest feast in 1621 written by Perry Ground below.

**Besides venison, what else *might* they have eaten?** Cranberries were available but not boiled into sauce because sugar was probably not available. Pumpkins and other squashes were grown by both groups but again probably not turned into pie for lack of butter and flour for the crust. White Potatoes were not grown in this area yet and sweet potatoes were still a rare delicacy so neither was likely served. The corn that Winslow describes as “we had a good increase of Indian Corne” was not the yellow, sweet corn that many people eat today; rather it would have been a white or flint corn that was common to the area at the time. So what did they eat? In part of Winslow’s letter, he describes lobster, eels, mussels, clams, grapes, several types of berries, plums and roses. We also know the Pilgrims planted turnips, carrots, onions, parsnips, cabbages and other herbs in their gardens. Dried beans, nuts and Jerusalem artichoke and some other wild plants could also have been available.

Now compare and contrast the foods eaten in 1621 with the “trimmings” most enjoy at a modern traditional Thanksgiving.

Foods eaten in 1621	Similarities	Thanksgiving Foods Now

**Follow up:** Look in the newspaper for recipes to add to your Thanksgiving celebration.

**Re-Thinking Thanksgiving: The Complete Story of an American Holiday**  
**Vocabulary – part 1**

Define the follow vocabulary words found in the features written by Perry Ground.

adverse \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Black Friday \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

bounty/bountiful \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

cavort \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

ceremonies \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

coexistence \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

coincide \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

devastating \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

documented \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

exterminated \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

harvest \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Re-Thinking Thanksgiving: The Complete Story of an American Holiday**  
**Vocabulary – part 2**

Define the follow vocabulary words found in the features written by Perry Ground.

Haudenosaunee \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

humiliation \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

iconic \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

observances \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

partake \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

pious \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

proclamation \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

publish \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

thanksgiving \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Follow up:** Read an interesting article in the newspaper and write down at least three words that you really don't know. Then find and record the definitions for each.



## **Re-Thinking Thanksgiving: The Complete Story of an American Holiday**

### **Other Resources:**

#### **Books**

“The Wampanoags” by Alice Flanagan

“Young Squanto – The First Thanksgiving” by Andrew Woods

“The Wampanoag Indians” by Bill Lund

“The First Thanksgiving” by Garnet Jackson

“If you were at...The First Thanksgiving” by Anne Kamma

“1621 – A New Look at Thanksgiving” by Catherine Grace and Margaret Bruchac

“Squanto’s Journey – The Story of the First Thanksgiving” by Joseph Bruchac

#### **Web Pages**

[www.Plimoth.org](http://www.Plimoth.org) - official site of Plimoth Plantation which offers powerful personal encounters with history built on thorough research about the Wampanoag People and the Colonial English community in the 1600s.

[www.NMAI.si.edu](http://www.NMAI.si.edu) – official site of the National Museum of the American Indian

[www.tolerance.org/activity/thanksgiving-mourning](http://www.tolerance.org/activity/thanksgiving-mourning) – Teaching Tolerance: A Project of the Southern Poverty Law Center’s Activity about Thanksgiving for students grades 6-8. In this activity, students will explore the perspectives of two Native American authors about the meaning of the Thanksgiving holiday and then write journal entries.

[www.scholastic.com/scholastic\\_thanksgiving/feast/](http://www.scholastic.com/scholastic_thanksgiving/feast/) – Scholastic, the global children's publishing, education and media company

[www.thanksgiving.org](http://www.thanksgiving.org) – more to do with religion but some good information on the holiday

[www.history.com/topics/thanksgiving](http://www.history.com/topics/thanksgiving) – official site of the History Channel, has interviews with re-enactors

[www.pbs.org/parents/special/thanksgiving.html](http://www.pbs.org/parents/special/thanksgiving.html) – a site that focuses on families teaching kids to be grateful/thankful

[www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/thanksgiving/timeline/1541.html](http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/thanksgiving/timeline/1541.html) – Library of Congress’s Thanksgiving Timeline

## Primary Source texts

### **Edward Winslow's letter (written December 11, 1621 and sent to England by ship):**

Original English: "Our Corne did proue well, & God be prayed, we had a good increase of Indian Corne, and our Barly indifferent good, but our Pease not worth the gathering, for we feared they were too late sowne, they came vp very well, and blossomed, but the Sunne parched them in the blossome; our harvest being gotten in, our Governour sent foure men on fowling, that so we might after a more speciall manner reioyce together, after we had gathered the fruit of our labors; they foure in one day killed as much fowle, as with a little helpe beside, served the Company almost a weeke, at which time amongst other Recreations, we exercised our Armes, many of the *Indians* coming amongst vs, and among the rest their greatest King *Massasoyt*, with some nintie men, whom for three dayes we entertained and feasted, and they went out and killed fiue Deere, which they brought to the Plantation and bestowed upon our Governour, and upon the Captaine, and others. And although it be not alwayes so plentifull, as it was at this time with vs, yet by the goodneses of God, we are so farre from want, that we often wish you partakers of our plenty."

Edward Winslow, Plymouth, in New England, this 11th of December, 1621. in A RELATION OR iournal of the beginning and proceedings of the English Plantation settled at Plimoth in NEW ENGLAND, by certaine English Aduenturers both Merchants and others. LONDON, Printed for iohn Bellamie, 1622. pp. 60-61.

**Modern Language Version:** Our corn did prove well, and, God be praised, we had a good increase of Indian corn, and our barley indifferent good, but our peas not worth the gathering, for we feared they were too late sown. They came up very well, and blossomed, but the sun parched them in the blossom.

Our harvest being gotten in, our governor sent four men on fowling, that so we might after a special manner rejoice together after we had gathered the fruit of our labors. They four in one day killed as much fowl as, with a little help beside, served the company almost a week. At which time, among other recreations, we exercised our arms, many of the Indians coming amongst us, and among the rest their greatest king Massasoit, with some ninety men, whom for three days we entertained and feasted, and they went out and killed five deer, which they brought to the plantation and bestowed upon our governor, and upon the captain, and others. And although it be not always so plentiful as it was at this time with us, yet by the goodness of God, we are so far from want that we often wish you partakers of our plenty.

Edward Winslow, December 11, 1621, in A Journal of the Pilgrims at Plymouth (Mourt's Relation: A Relation or Journal of the English Plantation settled at Plymouth in New England, by certain English adventurers both merchants and others.) Dwight Heath, ed. New York: Corinth Books, 1963, p. 82.

### **Governor William Bradford's Comments About the Harvest:**

Original English: "They begane now to gather in ye small harvest they had, and to fitte up their houses and dwellings against winter, being well recovered in health & strenght, and had all things in good plenty; for some were thus imployed in affairs abroad, others were excersised in fishing, aboute codd, & bass, & other fish, of which yey tooke good store, of which every family had their portion. All ye somer ther was no wante. And now begane to come in store of foule, as winter aproached, of which this place

did abound when they came first (but afterward decreased by degree). And besides water foule, ther was great store of wild Turkies, of which they took many, besides venison, &c. Besides they had aboute a peck a meale a weeke to a person, or now since harvest, Indean corne to yt proportion. Which made many afterwards write so largely of their plenty hear to their freinds in England, which were not fained, but true reports."

William Bradford. Bradford's History "Of Plimoth Plantation." Boston: Wright & Potter Printing Co., State Printers... 1898. p. 127.

**Modern Language Version:** They began now to gather in the small harvest they had, and to fit up their houses and dwelling against winter, being all well recovered in health and strength and had all things in good plenty. For as some were thus employed in affairs abroad, others were exercised in fishing, about cod and bass and other fish, of which they took good store, of which every family had their portion. All the summer there was no want; and now began to come in store of fowl, as winter approached, of which this place did abound when they first (but afterward decreased by degrees). And besides waterfowl there was great store of wild turkeys, of which they took many, besides venison, etc. Besides, they had about a peck a meal a week to a person, or now since harvest, Indian corn to that proportion. Which made many afterwards write so largely of their plenty here to their friends in England, which were not feigned but true reports.

William Bradford, Of Plimoth Plantation. Samuel Eliot Morison, ed. New York: Knopf, 1952. p.20

## **Re-Thinking Thanksgiving: The Complete Story of an American Holiday**

### **Answer Key:**

#### **Lesson 1: The “First Thanksgiving” ...or was it?**

##### **True or False?**

1. **False** – Although 102 people arrived on the Mayflower, only 53 were still alive at the time of the harvest celebration.
2. **False** – the harvest celebration lasted 3 days and therefore the participant shared many meals
3. **False** – the Wampanoag had age-old traditions and ceremonies for giving thanks
4. **True** – From Winslow’s letter we know the Indians numbered “ninetie” (90) men
5. **True** – Winslow’s letter tells us, “...and they went out and killed five Deere”
6. **True** – “Recreations” were also referenced in Winslow’s letter

#### **Lesson 2: Thanksgiving Becomes a Holiday...in December?**

##### **True or False?**

1. **False** – Thanksgiving wasn’t celebrated by the Pilgrims in 1622 and the holiday doesn’t become an annual event until hundreds of years later.
2. **True** – The Continental Congress issued the proclamation to set aside December 18, 1777 as a day of Public Thanksgiving.
3. **True** – He wrote, “...this was the First Thanksgiving, the harvest festival of New England”
4. **False** – The first president to proclaim a national day of Thanksgiving was George Washington.
5. **True** – In 1939 and 1940 FDR moved the holiday ahead one week
6. **False** – Congress passed a law declaring Thanksgiving be celebrated on the fourth Thursday of the month. Two out of every 7 year cycle the fourth Thursday falls on the next to the last Thursday of the month.