

**Topic: Holidays and Traditions - Thanksgiving**

**Let's get started...** Today, we will talk about Thanksgiving. It is an important holiday for Americans. Have you celebrated a Thanksgiving holiday in the United States? What did you do?

**Background:** Many people travel long distances to be with family members for the Thanksgiving holiday. Many people plan big dinner parties, and invite family and friends. People think about all the things in their lives that they are thankful for. People also remember the history of the holiday in the United States.

Some of the first people who came to America from Europe were the Pilgrims. They wanted religious freedom. When the Pilgrims came to the New World in 1620, the first winter was very harsh. It was cold. They did not have enough food. People got sick. Many people died. One of the Native American Indians, Squanto, helped the Pilgrims. He showed them how to plant corn using fish for fertilizer, and how to hunt for deer and wild turkeys. He showed them how to find and pick the edible berries (cranberries). The next year was a better one for the Pilgrims, and they had a good harvest, with a lot of food. To celebrate, they planned a big dinner, and invited the local Native Americans to come to the party. This was the first Thanksgiving, celebrated in November, 1621.

Today, traditional foods for the holiday include: roast turkey, potatoes, corn, cranberry sauce, and pumpkin pie.



**In pairs for 5 minutes, ask and answer these questions:**

What are some things in your life that you are happy about or thankful for?

Can you remember a holiday or special family time you had as a child? Tell your partner about it. What made it special to you?

**Share your partner's answers with the group.**

**Discussion Questions:**

Is there a special day in your home country when people “give thanks”?  
If so, please tell about it. What is it called? When is it? How do people celebrate it?

In America, family members may live far apart, so it is very special to have a holiday when they can celebrate together. In your home country do extended family members usually live nearby? How often do extended families spend time together?

Is there a holiday in your home country that is special for families?  
If so, please tell about it. What is it called? When is it? How do people celebrate it?

What are some common holiday foods in your home country? Do you eat different foods on different holidays?

What is your favorite holiday? What do you do to celebrate?

Has a person or a group of people ever helped you when you had a problem? What did they do to help you?

Schools and most businesses will be closed on Thanksgiving, and many will also be closed on the first Friday after Thanksgiving. Do you have any special plans for that 4-day weekend? What will you do?

The Friday after Thanksgiving is usually the busiest day of the year for stores. Many, many people go to buy gifts to give for the winter holidays. Malls are crowded. Some stores open at midnight and people line up to go inside for special bargains. What is the busiest shopping time in your home country?

Do you think you will go shopping the day after Thanksgiving? Where will you go? What will you buy?

Many people watch football games on Thanksgiving, before and/or after eating. In your home country, are there any TV shows that people watch on particular holidays? What are some holiday traditions that you celebrate?

What are your favorite holiday traditions?

For Thanksgiving, some people decorate their homes with turkeys, cornucopias, different colored leaves, and pumpkins or gourds. Do you decorate your house for any holidays or special occasions?

**New words and Idioms:**

celebrate, thankful, Pilgrims, religious freedom, New World, harsh, fertilizer, hunt, edible, harvest, Native Americans, give thanks, extended family, bargains, cornucopias, gourds.