

2019 Teaching Native American Histories Curricular Project*

You're Telling Me the Thanksgiving Story is a Lie? How Do You Know That?

Grade Level : 6-8

Subject Area Focus Social Studies

TNAH Conceptual Focus: Evaluating Resources

Estimated Number of Days to Complete: 3

Submitted by: Teresa Ann Willis

Date Submitted: July 25, 2019

Curricular Project Summary

NOTE: This lesson will be incorporated into a four- to six-week unit on America and its relationship to the one-thousand plus indigenous tribes commonly known as Native Americans.

In this lesson, students will examine print and video media that cite the reasons for today's Thanksgiving holiday and, in doing so, will learn how to ask critical thought and research questions across multiple sources to determine whether what they're reading is historically accurate.

Desired Results/Objectives

1. Essential Questions:

How do we know what we know about the past?

How do false narratives about America's past hurt us?

How do false historical narratives survive?

Why do false historical narratives survive?

How can I uncover/know the truth about the past? **(For this lesson we'll answer this EQ only)**

2. Objectives/Learning Targets/Transfer Skills:

- Students will understand how to ask critical questions when embarking upon a unit of historical study, questions including:
 1. Where does the author/writer get their information from? What are their sources?
 2. Is there another way to write about this person, group or event/incident in history?
 3. What's not included in this story?
 4. Why is the author/writer writing about this? Why does s/he want us to know this?
 5. Am I convinced by the author/writer's arguments, descriptions or statements in this story? If yes, why? If no, why not?

- When studying history, students will remember to search for multiple sources so they can critically assess historical narratives for truth, accuracy and perspective.

Stage 2 Assessment

Students will answer three questions demonstrating their understanding of what it means to critically research historical narratives.

1. Why is important for me to read multiple sources, including primary sources, when studying history?
2. What critical thought questions should I always be asking when I read historical narratives? Why?
3. What's the most significant thing I now understand about America's Thanksgiving Holiday? Why is that the most significant thing for me?

3. Curriculum Standards (National, State, Local):

New York State Content and Skills Standards (Da Remix!)

NOTE: The attached standards center the story of America's original inhabitants and are a rewrite of the New York State Social Studies 6th-Grade standards. For this stand-alone lesson, we focus on standards 7.2e and 7.2f only. In the larger unit being developed we'll hit all standards listed below plus additional content and skills standards:

7.2 FIRST CONTACT – ARRIVAL OF THE ENGLISH: After more than 12,000 years of inhabiting what is today southeastern Massachusetts and Rhode Island, Wampanoag people met French, Dutch and English people who came first to explore, fish and trade goods then later, to live and establish residences. The Wampanoag were a group of 69 distinct tribes who were greatly impacted by the people from Europe, first by the diseases that killed more than 90 percent of their people and later because the settlers who called themselves Separatists took the Wampanoag 's land and forced them into a different way of living.

7.2a Students will examine the Wampanoag culture and way of life before the arrival of settlers and how that changed once they began to coexist with Separatists.

7.2b Students will examine the methods European colonizers and settlers used to take land from the Native American tribes – methods including forcing Christianity upon them and establishing land titles that granted the settlers legal standing to control the land and thus, the Native American people themselves.

7.2c Students will explore the differences in thinking about land ownership between the Wampanoag and the English colonizers and they will understand the Doctrine of Discovery.

7.2d Students will explore the reasons why the false Thanksgiving story has existed for so long.

7.2e Students will use critical thought questions when reading, uncovering and examining historical narratives about the American Thanksgiving story.

7.2 f Students will determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source and provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

4. Enduring Understandings:

When studying history, it's key that I use critical thought questions and multiple sources in order to assess what I'm reading for truth, accuracy and perspective.

Assessment / Evidence

Pre-Assessment: Intro to the lesson: Students are shown a picture (attached) of a representation of "The First Thanksgiving" and asked 1) to describe what they're looking at 2) How they know that their description of what they see is true.

Transfer Skills Students Will Acquire

- Students will understand how to ask critical questions when embarking upon a unit of historical study – questions including:
 1. Where does the author/writer get their information from? What are their sources?
 2. Is there another way to write about this person, group or event/incident in history?
 3. What's not included in this story?
 4. Why is the author/writer writing about this? Why does s/he want us to know this?
 5. Am I convinced by the author/writer's arguments, descriptions or statements in this story? If yes, why? If no, why not?
- When studying history, students will be able to search for multiple sources so they can critically assess historical narratives for truth, accuracy and perspective.

Stage 2 Formative Assessment

Students will answer three questions demonstrating their understanding of what it means to critically research historical narratives.

1. Why is important for me to read multiple sources, including primary sources, when studying history?
2. What critical thought questions should I always be asking when I read historical narratives? Why?
3. What's the most significant thing I now understand about America's Thanksgiving Holiday? Why is that the most significant thing for me?

Learning Plan

Day One: You're Telling Me the Thanksgiving Story is a Lie? How do You Know That?

Introduction: Pre-Assessment: (5 minutes)

Students are shown a picture (attached) of a representation of "The First Thanksgiving" and asked:

1. Please describe what you're looking at.
2. How do you know your description of what you see is accurate?

Whole Class Instruction: (35 minutes)

Students read aloud Edward Winslow's account of what's commonly referred to as "The First Thanksgiving". Next, teachers give a brief history of the events that preceded the events detailed by Winslow and they expound upon the Winslow text.

Teachers then review with students critical thought questions to be asked when conducting research and examining historical narratives:

1. Where does the author/writer get their information from? What are their sources?
2. Is there another way to write about this person, group or event/incident in history?
3. What's not included in this story?
4. Why is the author/writer writing about this? Why does s/he want us to know this?
5. Am I convinced by the author/writer's arguments, descriptions or statements in this story? If yes, why? If no, why not?

Next, students examine the first three paragraphs of a recent news articles about Thanksgiving that cites Edward Winslow's account and uses it to bolster his argument. In that piece, the journalist uses ellipsis to omit portions of Winslow's account. After describing for students how and why ellipsis is used in texts, teachers engage students in a dialogue about the significance of the omitted text and why the author may have omitted the text.

Still in a whole-class format, students read from an account of "The First Thanksgiving" featured on the Eyewitness to History website. Students are asked to determine if the Eyewitness to History account matches Winslow's *eyewitness* account.

Closing (5 minutes)

For the closing students are given a homework assignment. Their task is to conduct research via an internet search to find out why the English colonists who participated in "The First Thanksgiving" are called Pilgrims. Teachers give students the direct explicit instruction to enter into their search engine these words: "Why are the pilgrims called pilgrims." The following entry will likely be the first to appear:

The Pilgrims – HISTORY <https://www.history.com/topics/colonial-america/pilgrims>

There's a 2:37 video embedded in the text that begins automatically. Students will watch the video in class on Day 2 and will critique its content using their critical thought questions.

Learning Plan

Day Two: You're Telling Me the Thanksgiving Story is a Lie? How do You Know That?

Whole Class Discussion of How Pilgrims Got Their Name (10 Minutes)

Students report back on their homework/research assignment. Teachers engage students in a discussion on how history is recorded and how historical narratives can change over time.

Whole Class Instruction:

Students and teachers critically analyze a 2-minute 37-second video clip describing the "Pilgrims" and the first Thanksgiving. (10 minutes)

<https://www.history.com/topics/colonial-america/pilgrims>

Small Group Work Within a Whole Class Discussion and Read Aloud Part 1 (20 minutes)

Students will convene in groups of 4 or 5. Teachers will read aloud an article titled: *Colonists at the First Thanksgiving Were Mostly Men Because Women Had Perished*. During the reading of the article, teachers pause while students answer and discuss the critical thought questions embedded within the article. This exercise will be completed during the next day's social studies period.

Day Three: You're Telling Me the Thanksgiving Story is a Lie? How do You Know That?

Small Group Work Within a Whole Class Discussion and Read Aloud Part 2 (10 minutes)

Students will convene in groups of 4 or 5. Teachers will read aloud an article titled: *Colonists at the First Thanksgiving Were Mostly Men Because Women Had Perished*. During the reading of the article, teachers pause while students answer and discuss the critical thought questions embedded within the article.

Assessment (15 minutes)

Students complete a written formative assessment to demonstrate their understanding of what it means to critically research historical narratives. Using explicit detail and writing in complete sentences, students recall the previous day's exercises where they critically analyzed print and video media, and they offer a clear concise rationale for the importance of asking critical thought questions while examining multiple primary and secondary sources when studying history. Students answer the questions below:

1. Why is important for me to read multiple sources, including primary sources, when studying history?
2. What critical thought questions should I always be asking when I read historical narratives? Why?
3. What's the most significant thing I now understand about America's Thanksgiving Holiday? Why is that the most significant thing for me?

Closing Ritual: Thanksgiving Offering (15 minutes)

To be determined by classroom teachers and students.

Rationale

The story commonly told about the first Thanksgiving is not true. Not examining and uncovering America's true history prevents us from understanding why things are the way they are today. This lesson was designed to be used as a stand-alone lesson during the two-to-three days preceding the Thanksgiving Holiday break.

The "Thanksgiving Lie" is a small but significant part of the larger lie America tells and more often, doesn't speak on at all about its history of the colonization, murder and oppression of indigenous peoples starting with the Wampanoag and continuing until today. Teachers are invited to include this lesson in a broader study of the history of America and its relationship to the one-thousand-plus indigenous nations that are still with us. I'll be creating that curriculum, likely a four- to six-week unit of study, during the upcoming school year.

Materials and Sources Used

Images

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/6e/The_First_Thanksgiving_cph.3g04961.jpg

Videos

<https://www.history.com/topics/colonial-america/pilgrims>

Articles

The Plymouth Colony Archive Project. (n.d.). Retrieved from
<http://www.histarch.illinois.edu/plymouth/mourt6.html>

Daly M. (2017, April, 13). The Pilgrims Were the Original Refugees. *The Daily Beast*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailybeast.com/>

The First Thanksgiving, 1621. (n.d.) Retrieved from
<http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/thanksgiving.htm>

Wilson, R.F. (n.d.) Thanksgiving and the Pilgrims. Retrieved from
http://www.joyfulheart.com/thanksgiving/pilgrim_name.htm

Pruitt, S. (2018, November, 16). Colonists at the First Thanksgiving Were Mostly Men Because Women Had Perished Retrieved from
<https://www.history.com/news/first-thanksgiving-colonists-native-americans-men>

Critical Thought Questions for Examining Sources

1. Where does the author/writer get their information from? What are their sources?
2. Is there another way to write about this person, group or event/incident in history?
3. What's not included in this story?
4. Why is the author/writer writing about this? Why does s/he want us to know this?
5. Am I convinced by the author/writer's arguments, descriptions or statements in this story? If yes, why? If no, why not?

Assessment Questions

1. Why is important for me to read multiple sources, including primary sources, when studying history?
2. What critical thought questions should I always be asking when I read historical narratives? Why?
3. What's the most significant thing I now understand about America's Thanksgiving Holiday? Why is that the most significant thing for me?

LESSON RESOURCES:
ATTACHMENTS



[A painting by Jean Leon Gerome Ferris titled 'The First Thanksgiving' shows pilgrims and Native Americans gathering to share a meal.](#)

NOV 16, 2018

Colonists at the First Thanksgiving Were Mostly Men Because Women Had Perished

The three-day feast was about giving thanks, but it wasn't much like today's holiday.

SARAH PRUITT



The First Thanksgiving, painted by Jennie Augusta Brownscombe. Barney Burstein/Corbis/VCG/Getty Images **(Who is Jennie Augusta Brownscombe and why did she paint this painting. How does she know it's an accurate illustration of the people at "The First Thanksgiving?)"**

As families around the country prepare to gather with family, eat turkey and perhaps partake in some Black Friday shopping, they might be surprised to learn how much we don't know about the origins of the [Thanksgiving](#). What we do know is most of the adult colonists in attendance were men—and they were outnumbered by their Native American guests. **(Why?)**

Nearly all of what historians have learned about the first Thanksgiving comes from a single eyewitness report: a letter written in December 1621 by Edward Winslow, one of the 100 or so people who sailed from England aboard the *Mayflower* in 1620 and founded Plymouth Colony in Massachusetts. William Bradford, Plymouth's governor in 1621, wrote briefly of the event in *Of Plymouth Plantation*, his history of the colony, but that was more than 20 years after the feast itself.

According to this account, the historic event didn't happen on the fourth Thursday in November, as it does today—and it wasn't known as Thanksgiving. In fact, it took place over three days sometime between late September and mid-November in 1621, and was considered a harvest celebration.

“Basically it was to celebrate the end of a successful harvest,” says Tom Begley, the executive liaison for administration, research and special projects at [Plimoth Plantation](#). “The three-day celebration included feasting, games and military exercises, and there was definitely an amount of diplomacy between the colonists and the native attendees as well.”



A depiction of early settlers of the Plymouth Colony sharing a harvest Thanksgiving meal with members of the local Wampanoag tribe at the Plymouth Plantation. Frederic Lewis/Archive Photos/Getty Images
(Compare this image with the image from the first page of this article. What do you notice?)

It was a feast for a young crowd.

[Just over 50 colonists](#) are believed to have attended, including 22 men, four married women—including Edward Winslow's wife—and more than 25 children and teenagers. These were the lucky ones who had made it through a [rough entry into the New World](#), including a harsh winter during which an epidemic of disease swept through the colony, felling nearly half the original group. Some 78 percent of the women who had arrived on the Mayflower had died during the first winter, a far higher percentage than for men or children. “For the English, [the first Thanksgiving] was also celebrating the fact that they had survived their first year here in New England,” Begley points out.

The Plymouth colonists were likely outnumbered more than two-to-one at the event by their Native American guests. Winslow's account records “many of the Indians coming amongst us, and amongst the rest their greatest king Massasoit, with some ninety men.” Massasoit (who was actually named Ousemequin) was the sachem (leader) of the Pokanoket [Wampanoag](#), a local Native American

society that had begun dealings with the colonists earlier in 1621. **(Why is the author characterizing them this way? Is this characterization accurate? Is there another way she could have written about them?)**

“We don't know for sure how it came about that they were there,” Begley says of the Native Americans at the first Thanksgiving. “Some native historians have suggested that Massasoit and his men were in the area anyways, because at the end of the harvest was when they typically made their diplomatic rounds to other native groups. Also, Massasoit commented to the Pilgrims in March of 1621 that they would be back to plant the corn on the south side of what we know as Town Brook in Plymouth. So he still recognizes that there are some planting grounds that are his peoples' in Plymouth.” **(Hmmm? Are there any other theories as to why they were there? Looks like I've got some research to do!)**

The first feast was also about giving thanks.

While the 1621 event may not have been called Thanksgiving, the sentiment was certainly present in that historic celebration, just as it would play a defining role in how the tradition developed over the centuries to come.

“Giving thanks is really an important part of both cultures,” Begley says. “For the English, before and after every meal there was a prayer of thanksgiving. For something on this scale, celebrating a successful harvest, there definitely would have been moments of giving thanks to their God.” **(I know this guy Begley is an expert, but being the EXPERT researcher I am, I must independently confirm that giving thanks was an important part of both cultures.)**

For the Native Americans at the first Thanksgiving, giving thanks was a daily part of life. “We as native people [traditionally] have thanksgivings as a daily, ongoing thing,” Linda Coombs, the former associate director of the Wampanoag program at Plimoth Plantation, [*told the Christian Science Monitor*](#). “Every time anybody went hunting or fishing or picked a plant, they would offer a prayer or acknowledgment.”

Venison and shellfish were on the menu.

When the colonists and Native Americans [*sat down to feast*](#), they probably enjoyed quite different fare than what we're used to seeing on our Thanksgiving tables today. They *may* have eaten wild turkey, which Bradford mentions was plentiful in the colony, but it's not certain even that most ubiquitous of Thanksgiving staples was on the menu.

In addition to venison (Winslow wrote that the Native Americans killed five deer and presented it to the colonists), Begley says that the group probably ate fish and shellfish, which were abundant in the region, as well as fruits and vegetables that the colonists grew in their home gardens. “Cabbage,

carrot, cucumbers, leeks, lettuce, parsnips, pumpkins,” he lists. “There were also a lot of native wild plants that English learned how to cook, including Jerusalem artichokes, garlic, cranberries, Concord grapes, walnuts and chestnuts.”

The Plymouth colonists certainly did not serve potatoes, which weren't available to them at the time, and it's unlikely they prepared the sweet cranberry sauce we know today—their cranberries were more likely a tart garnish. Pumpkin pie would have been impossible, as the colony didn't have butter, wheat flour or an oven.

As for who prepared the food for the first Thanksgiving, Winslow's account (like many contemporary sources) doesn't offer much in the way of domestic details. “There were only four English housewives that were alive in 1621, out of, I think, 20 that came on the *Mayflower*,” Begley says. “That's not really a lot of people to help you prepare a meal for over 100. So we can speculate that the children, servants and probably some unmarried men were also helping out in preparing all the food.”

The fall tradition took hold in New England.

While it's not known whether the Plymouth colonists repeated the 1621 celebration in subsequent years, the tradition of giving thanks to God merged with celebrations of the harvest to become a fall tradition in New England by the late 1600s.

But the significance of that first 1621 harvest celebration didn't really emerge until the mid-19th century, after the writer Alexander Young rediscovered Winslow's letter and made it famous in his 1841 book *Chronicles of the Pilgrim Fathers*. Bradford's manuscript, stolen by the British during the Revolutionary War, was recovered in the 1850s, just in time for the magazine editor [Sarah Josepha Hale](#) to incorporate it into her campaign to create an official national Thanksgiving holiday. (Hmmm? I wonder WHY Sarah Josepha Hale was working to create an official national Thanksgiving holiday?)

In 1863, Hale achieved her goal when President [Abraham Lincoln](#) proclaimed the final Thursday in November as a national Thanksgiving holiday for the first time. From its roots in the Plymouth harvest celebration to Hale and Lincoln's attempt to mend a divided nation during the [Civil War](#), we can trace the origins of the annual celebration of family, food and gratitude we know today.

As for Black Friday, [that's a whole other story](#).

Citation Information

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How the Pilgrims Got their Name

by Dr. Ralph F. Wilson



"Mayflower in Plymouth Harbor," by William Halsall (1882). The original oil painting may be seen in Pilgrim Hall Museum, Plymouth, Massachusetts.

It wasn't until 1840 that the term "Pilgrim" came to refer to the early Mayflower settlers.

The Pilgrims (though they weren't called that at the time) originated with the members of a Separatist congregation from Scrooby, Nottinghamshire, England, whose pastors were Richard Clifton and John Robinson.¹ This congregation suffered difficult persecution in England because they dissented from the state Church of England. William Bradford, one of the original Mayflower emigrants, wrote that

"[The church members] were hunted and persecuted on every side, so as their former afflictions were as flea-bitings in comparison of these which now came upon them. For some were taken and clapt up in prison, others had their houses besett and watcht night and day, and hardly escaped their hands; and the most were faine to flie and leave their howses and habitations, and the means of their livelihood... Yet, seeing themselves thus molested, and that there was no hope of their continuance there, but a joynt consent, they resolved to goe into the Low Countries, where they heard was freedom of religion for all men...."²

The congregation moved to Holland in 1607 where religious freedom was greater. Some who were in prison, didn't get there for another year.

They settled in Amsterdam for a year, but then moved to Leiden, Holland, where they lived for a dozen years. But life was difficult for these expatriates. As foreigners they were deprived of a chance at the best jobs, and struggled to maintain even a low standard of living. Times were tough. But what caused them to move were their teenagers. They had religious freedom, but

"Many of their children by the great licentiousness of youth in that countrie, and the manifold temptations of the place, were drawne away by evill examples into extravagante and dangerous courses."³

They were losing their young people and struggling at the bottom of the economic scale. If they returned to England they faced severe persecution and imprisonment. So in 1620

many from the congregation decided to emigrate to America, to the New World. Three groups came on the Mayflower:

1. Saints — members of the Separatist Leiden congregation,
2. Strangers — members of the Church of England who were emigrating for economic reasons, and
3. Crew Members — seamen aboard the Mayflower, some of whom were contracted to work in the Plymouth Colony for a year or longer.

The "strangers" weren't non-Christians. They were probably members of the Church of England and would count themselves as Christians. But they didn't share the Separatists' refusal to be a part of what they considered to be the corrupt state church.

We ought to make a couple of distinctions here. Strictly speaking, Separatists were pious Christians who had given up on the Church of England and formed their own congregations. Puritans, on the other hand, were members of the Church of England who wanted to purify the Church from its worldliness and corruption. Instead of separating (in the early days), they formed religious societies within Anglican congregations. A number of these groups, like the Mayflower group, fled to Holland. They were the beginnings of the Congregationalist and Baptist churches that put down early roots in America.

Though the Plymouth Colony was the first Separatist colony in New England, the Puritan Massachusetts Bay Colony was established by royal charter in 1629. But apparently the Massachusetts Puritans had something in common with the Plymouth Separatists even before they sailed for America — the autonomy of the local congregation and a restriction of membership to "those predestined to be God's elect."⁴ As time went on the churches in Plymouth and the Massachusetts Bay Colony came to resemble each other.

But the Plymouth colonists still weren't called Pilgrims, not for many years, not until 1840. At that point someone resurrected William Bradford's original phrase describing the Saints that had left Leiden to travel aboard the Mayflower to the New World. They left Leiden, he said, "that goodly & pleasante citie which had been their resting place for near 12 years; but **they knew they were pilgrimes**, & looked not much on those things, but lift up their eyes to ye heavens, their dearest cuntrie, and quieted their spirits."⁵

Since the 1840s the Mayflower settlers have been referred to as the Pilgrims, echoing the verse from the Bible that Bradford had in mind:

"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were **strangers and pilgrims on the earth**. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city" (Hebrews 11:13-16, KJV).

References:

1. General background information comes from: Eugene Aubrey Stratton, *Plymouth Colony: Its History and People 1620-1691* (Salt Lake City: Ancestry Publishing, 1986), 481 pages, paperback. George F. Willison, *Saints and Strangers* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1945), 513 pages, hardcover. Albert Matthews' exhaustive history of the use of the term "Pilgrim Fathers" is found in the Colonial Society of Massachusetts *Publications* XVII (1915) 300-392.
2. William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation (1620-1647)*, chapter 1.
3. *Ibid.*, chapter 4.
4. Stratton, p. 41.
5. Bradford, chapter 7.

[Bkmrk](#)

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The First Thanksgiving, 1621

It was not what they had planned. In September of 1620, 102 pilgrims embarked from England aboard the *Mayflower* (see [Aboard the Mayflower, 1620](#)). Their intent was to establish a settlement in the Hudson River area in the northern reaches of the recently established Virginia Colony. However, after a sixty-six-day journey they made landfall some 150 miles north of their target (whether by design or mishap is unclear) at the eastern tip of Cape Cod in present-day Massachusetts. They explored the area for about a month and then sailed further west to the mainland at present-day Plymouth. It was here that they decided to establish a new homeland.



The First Thanksgiving
Jean Louis Gerome Ferris
1863-1930

For the first few months the majority of the expedition remained cloistered aboard ship where many succumbed to mal-nutrition and disease. It is estimated that half of their number died by the following Spring. With the return of favorable weather the remaining adventurers abandoned their ship and moved ashore to establish a settlement in the wilderness. They were aided by two members of the local Native American tribes. To the astonishment of the Pilgrims, both of these Good Samaritans spoke English. One, Squanto, a member of the Pawtuxet tribe, had been kidnapped by English adventurers a few years earlier and taken to England. He was subsequently able to achieve his release and return to his homeland

The Pilgrims' first corn harvest was successful and in November the group's leader, Governor William Bradford, called for a feast to celebrate their good fortune. Hunters were sent into the wilderness to hunt game for the event. Members of the local Native American tribes were invited and brought deer meat to add to the menu. The celebration lasted for three days

"...for three days we entertained and feasted."

Edward Winslow was among the group of Pilgrims present at the first Thanksgiving. He describes the scene:

"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, amongst other recreations, we exercised our arms, and 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 on 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."

References:

Edward Winslow's account appears in: Heath, Dwight, *A Journal of the Pilgrims at Plymouth: Mourt's Relation* (1963); *EyeWitness to America* (1997); Morrison, Samuel Eliot, *Builders of the Bay Colony* (1930).

How To Cite This Article:

"The First Thanksgiving, 1621," *EyeWitness to History*, www.eyewitnesstohistory.com (2010).

<http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/thanksgiving.htm>

DAILY BEAST

AMERICAN SPIRIT

The Pilgrims Were the Original Refugees

They were the first immigrants to come to America fleeing persecution—and their spirit of gratitude is an obligation that extends throughout the generations.



Michael Daly

Special Correspondent

Updated 04.13.17 6:16PM ET / Published 11.25.15 9:10PM ET

Long before [Syrians fled ISIS](#) and Jews fled the Nazis and Irish fled the famine, the Puritans fled persecution to become the original refugees to alight on our shores.

In gratitude for having found refuge and for the assistance they received from the Native Americans after landing at Plymouth Rock, the Puritans we call Pilgrims held what we know as the first Thanksgiving.

“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... 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,” wrote Edward Winslow of that gathering in November of 1621.

“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.”

<https://www.thedailybeast.com/the-pilgrims-were-the-original-refugees?ref=scroll>

Edward Winslow, Mourt's Relation:

"our harvest being gotten in, our governour sent foure men on fowling, that so we might after a speciall manner rejoyce together, after we had gathered the fruits of our labours ; 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 us, and amongst the rest their greatest king Massasoyt, with some ninetie men, whom for three dayes we entertained and feasted, and they went out and killed five Deere, which they brought to the Plantation and bestowed on our Governour, and upon the Captaine and others. And although it be not always so plentifull, as it was at this time with us, yet by the goodness of God, we are so farre from want, that we often wish you partakers of our plentie."