



This content package contains a variety of content resources related to November’s theme of Thanksgiving. Topics include American Indians, Festivals, American Culture, Tradition, Food, and more. We have split the content by the type of media or usage: Activities and Lesson Plans; Podcasts and Playlists; Videos; Articles and Blog Posts. We also provide ideas for ways to use the content in an American Spaces program. Please send any feedback to Lauren Appelbaum ([AppelbaumL@si.edu](mailto:AppelbaumL@si.edu)).

## Activities and Lesson Plans

### [American Indian Perspectives on Thanksgiving](#) (Harvest, American Indians, Holidays)

Explore the themes of environment, community, and cultural interaction that are central to understanding both American Indians and the Thanksgiving holiday with this educator’s guide from the National Museum of the American Indian. *Use the ‘Ideas for the Classroom’ section within each theme to guide participants of all ages through thoughtful reflection of the material through discussion and archived stories from National Public Radio linked within the educator’s guide. Use the accompanying transcripts from the National Public Radio recordings to assist with English language learning. Ask participants to consider how their perceptions of American Indians and Thanksgiving have changed.*

### [Harvest Ceremony: Beyond the Thanksgiving Myth](#) (American Indians and U.S. History)

Contemporary celebrations of the Thanksgiving holiday focus on the idea of a friendly gathering of two groups who shared a meal and lived harmoniously when in reality the gatherings had more to do with political alliances, diplomacy, and temporary peaceful coexistence. *Have participants read the study guide and use the prompts in “Classroom Discussion Topics” to spark conversation about the modern Thanksgiving story versus what actually happened. Encourage participants to research the various ways that Native people in their region give thanks. Why is giving thanks important?*

## Podcasts and Playlists

### [History Explorer: Thanksgiving and Harvest Celebrations](#) (Tradition and Cultural Exchange)

Listen to National Museum of American History curator Rayna Green discuss Thanksgiving, the meaning behind harvest celebrations, and the significance of sharing a meal with others. *Use this podcast to facilitate discussion about the Thanksgiving holiday or the traditional food shared at a Thanksgiving table. A list of [discussion questions and additional resources](#) provide helpful guidance for themes and lesson planning. An accompanying transcript is available to promote English language learning.*

### [Thanksgiving from Smithsonian Folkways](#) (Tradition and Song)

This Thanksgiving playlist touches on the themes of thanks, homecoming, and food. *Consider using this playlist to accompany any Thanksgiving celebration you host. Use the songs to spark discussion about Thanksgiving traditions and encourage participants to determine what they are thankful for or what lyrics they would include in a Thanksgiving song.*





## Videos

### [Here's How Astronauts Will Eat Thanksgiving Dinner in Space](#) (Science, Food, Tradition)

Mmmm, irradiated smoked turkey and thermostabilized yams. Even astronauts celebrate Thanksgiving with modified versions of the main holiday food staples aboard the International Space Station. The two videos provide a glimpse of the foods consumed in space for Thanksgiving and explore the science behind their development. *Use the blog post and videos to discuss how astronauts eat for the Thanksgiving holiday. Consider discussing the science of food with help from "[Science Trivia on Your Thanksgiving Plate](#)". Closed captioning is available to promote English language learning.*

## Articles and Blog Posts

### [Thanksgiving in North America: From Local Harvests to National Holiday](#) (Festivals, American Culture, History)

Many people are familiar with the Pilgrim's Thanksgiving Feast of 1621, but few realize that it was not the first festival of its kind in North America. Discover how Thanksgiving came to hold the cultural significance that it does today with this article and transcript of George Washington's Proclamation. *Consider using this blog entry to discuss the history of the holiday. Encourage participants to write their own proclamation for Thanksgiving, a made up holiday or one that has local or cultural significance.*

### Thanksgiving Meal Blog Posts (Food, Tradition, Agriculture)

Use these blog posts to learn more about the traditional foods served at a Thanksgiving feast. Learn about what was on the menu at the first Thanksgiving compared to today, read about how Pilgrims celebrated the harvest, and explore where your Thanksgiving meal was grown with an interactive map of the United States. *Use these blog posts to discuss how foods at the Thanksgiving meal have changed or evolved over time. Consider working with someone in the local agriculture industry to facilitate discussion about how and where foods are grown for Thanksgiving.*

- <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/what-was-on-the-menu-at-the-first-thanksgiving-511554/?no-ist>
- <http://blog.americanhistory.si.edu/osaycanyousee/2012/11/fire-questions-for-a-colonial-culinarian-yum.html>
- <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/where-does-your-thanksgiving-meal-come-from-138705036/>

### [Recipe of the Week: Thanksgiving with Julia Child](#) (American Culture, Cooking, Thanksgiving Meal)

This blog post discusses Julia Child's own food preparation recommendations for a large gathering such as Thanksgiving and asks the question *What Would Julia Do?* *Use this blog post in coordination with a lesson on Thanksgiving and the Thanksgiving meal. Recipes linked within the post can be passed out or used in a program or lesson. Consider working with a local chef or baker to host a lecture or demonstration about the different cooking techniques necessary for preparing a Thanksgiving feast.*

November: Thanksgiving





[Do American Indians celebrate Thanksgiving?](#) (American Indians, Culture, Tradition)

This essay by Dennis Zotigh was widely commented on when he wrote it for Thanksgiving 2011. In 2013, it was republished to include readers' thoughts on Thanksgiving, the first lesson about American Indian history most non-Native Children receive. *Use this essay and the accompanying comments in coordination with a lesson comparing the different ways the history of the holiday is presented. Encourage participants to discuss and reflect upon the writer's sentiments about the damage and harm to the cultural self-esteem of American Indian people that is perpetuated by what American children are traditionally taught about the history of the holiday.*

[Home away from home: Thanksgiving on base and at sea](#) (Military, Tradition, Food)

Examine historic Thanksgiving menus from U.S. military posts in this blog entry that highlights the importance of the traditional meal in association with the celebration of this holiday. *Use this blog post to facilitate a discussion about Thanksgiving away from home for members of the military and the value of tradition in regards to the Thanksgiving holiday, or even a local or cultural holiday. Encourage participants to share what personal traditions make their holiday special. Consider working with a member of the military to facilitate discussion of the significance of observing traditions at home and away.*

[Baked beans, coffee, and bread: A Civil War Thanksgiving](#) (U.S. History, Civil War, Holidays, Family)

Read a letter written by a Union soldier to his family during the Civil War as he imagines the Thanksgiving meal his family was enjoying without him and reflects on what he is thankful for, even when far from home. *Use this blog post with the transcribed Thanksgiving letter to talk about how a Civil War soldier felt about being away from home during this American holiday. Encourage participants to think about what they are thankful for in a letter to their family.*

[The Puppeteer Who Brought Balloons to the Thanksgiving Day Parade](#) (Tradition, American Culture, Parades)

Learn about the history of the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, an annual holiday tradition. Click through the images within the article to read excerpts from a book detailing the history of the event, including additional historic images. *Use this article to talk about the tradition of the Thanksgiving Macy's Day Parade and its iconic balloons. Have participants design their own parade balloon or float and discuss other Thanksgiving traditions that make the holiday unique to each participant.*

[Pilgrims' Progress](#) (History, Immigration, Religious Tolerance)

Who were the Pilgrims? This article retraces the travels of the group that founded Plymouth Colony and gave us Thanksgiving. *Read this blog post to learn about this courageous group of individuals who came to America to avoid religious persecution and encourage participants to think about what these individuals were looking for as they created new homes in North America. Use this article in coordination with an article about the first Thanksgiving or Thanksgiving from the perspective of American Indians to spark thoughtful discussion about the history of the holiday.*





**The Science of Thanksgiving Articles** (Food, Science, Food Preparation)

Use these articles for a more scientific take on Thanksgiving holiday. Learn about why green beans tenderize when cooked and what makes a turkey juicy; why people always have room for dessert after the Thanksgiving meal; and predictions for a meal-in-a-pill. *Consider using these articles in coordination with a cooking demonstration of a typical Thanksgiving dish or encourage participants to try these recipes out at home. Have participants to come up with variations on the Thanksgiving classics or discuss the future of food today. Would you eat a Thanksgiving meal-in-a-pill?*

- <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/the-science-of-cooking-a-turkey-and-other-thanksgiving-dishes-138311115/>
- <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/why-youll-still-have-room-for-pie-after-turkey-and-stuffing-137910574/>
- <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/a-thanksgiving-meal-in-a-pill-731036/>

