

# Movie Kit



American  
Spaces



## *Planes, Trains and Automobiles*

**Director:** John Hughes

**Year made:** 1987

**Starring:** Steve Martin, John Candy

**Rating:** R

**Length:** 1h 33min

**English level:** Medium

**Themes:** American and Thanksgiving Culture

### Warning/General Advisory

Includes strong language, a brief sexual image, homosexual innuendos, and a car crash scene.

### Context

This movie is set in the 1980s in New York, Wichita, St. Louis, and Chicago. A few days before Thanksgiving, a businessman, Neal, struggles to travel home for the holiday after his flight is delayed. He is forced to find different modes of transportation to get home on time, and meets and travels with an annoying salesman, Del, who sells shower curtain rings. Along the way, Neal and Del develop a complicated friendship which culminates in a final Thanksgiving celebration of gratitude and friendship.

### Key Vocabulary/Places

- **Thanksgiving** – national holiday celebrated every November to commemorate a harvest festival celebrated by the Pilgrims in 1621
- **Wichita** – city in the state of Kansas
- **St. Louis** – city in the state of Missouri
- **La Guardia Airport** - airport in New York City
- **O'Hare Airport** – airport in Chicago

### Discussion Questions

- Why was it so important for Neal to be home for Thanksgiving?
- Do you have a harvest festival in your culture? What are the foods and traditions for this festival? What are the most important holidays in your culture?
- Have you been on a road trip before? Where did you go and whom did you go with?
- What kind of relationship do Neal and Del have?
- Why do you think Del keeps helping Neal? How does Neal respond?
- In the end, why does Neal invite Del to his house?
- Many Americans think of this movie as a classic holiday movie. What are some of the classic holiday movies in your culture?

Map for context: New York → Wichita → St. Louis → Chicago

