

A pilgrim is a person who goes on a pilgrimage. A pilgrimage is a trip to a sacred site or a site of historic significance. For example, Muslims make a pilgrimage to Mecca. Christians might make a pilgrimage to Notre Dame.

But in the U.S. when we say “pilgrims” we tend to think of the settlers who arrived here from England in 1620. These were religious separatists who were unhappy in England because they did not want to worship in the Church of England. They wanted to separate from the Church of England and have their own religious sect.

One hundred and two people sailed on the Mayflower to the shores of America. They arrived in December of 1620 and by fall of 1621 forty six Pilgrims had died due to illness and starvation. But the harvest of 1621 was bountiful thanks to help from Native Americans who had taught the settlers what crops to grow and how to grow them.

The Pilgrims decided to have a feast to celebrate and give thanks for their survival. This “Thanksgiving Feast” is what we celebrate each November. Families gather to visit and eat together. Traditional foods including turkey, dressing, potatoes, yams, corn, cranberry sauce, pumpkin pie and pecan pie are served.

Do you have a celebration of thanks? Do you have traditional foods that are eaten at this time?

Words and phrases you might here around Thanksgiving:

Cold turkey: to suddenly and completely stop doing something, especially bad habits. Have you ever quit something “cold turkey”?

Trimmings: extras that accompany the turkey. Describe a big meal you have at holidays. Be sure to tell about all the trimmings.

Eat like a bird: to eat only a small amount. Is there anyone in your family that eats like a bird? Do others try to encourage them to eat? Is overeating considered a bad thing in your culture?

Sweet tooth: a love for sugary foods. Do you have a sweet tooth? What are your favorite sweet foods?

I’m stuffed: people say this when they have eaten so much food that they feel full and uncomfortable. EX: Would you like some more pie? No thanks, I’m stuffed. What kind of food are you likely to eat too much of?

set the table: to put the plates, silverware, glasses and condiments on the table in preparation for a meal. Sometimes children are given the job of setting the table. Do your children help set the table? Who does the meal preparation at your house?

sleep in: to sleep late. EX: The Friday after Thanksgiving is a holiday, so we can sleep in. Do you like to sleep late, or are you an early riser?

grace: a prayer said before eating. EX: Let’s hold hands and say grace before we carve the turkey. Is it common in your culture to say a prayer before eating?

stock up: to gather plenty of supplies. EX: My Uncle Harry is coming and he loves salty snacks, so we will stock up on chips and pretzels. If you have guests coming, what kinds of food do you stock up on?

eat out: to eat a meal somewhere other than your home, usually in a restaurant. EX: I usually cook Thanksgiving dinner, but this year we will eat out. Do you enjoy eating out, or do you prefer to eat at home? What kinds of foods do you prefer when you eat out?

give thanks: what people usually mean when they say “give thanks” is to say a prayer for the things you are thankful for. EX: Bow your heads and we will give thanks. What are you most thankful for?

feast your eyes: to look at something with pleasure or admiration. For example, when the hostess brings in a big roasted turkey on a platter, you might say, “Feast your eyes on that beautiful bird!”

Fill in the sentences below with the words in the chart.

yams	separate	feast
pumpkin	Separatists	dressing
turkey	harvest	blessings

Pilgrims were called _____ because they wanted to _____ from the Church of England.

A large bird that is native to America and is usually eaten at Thanksgiving.

At Thanksgiving, we give thanks for all the good things that we have, like family, nice homes, plenty to eat. We call these gifts from God _____.

The _____ is a small red berry that grows in North America. We make a sweet sauce out of these berries that tastes very good when eaten with turkey.

Another name for a sweet potato is _____. We eat them mashed with butter and cinnamon. Many people put roasted marshmallows on top before serving.

A large meal with many kinds of foods is called a _____.

When we gather our ripened crops we call this a _____.

A mixture of cornbread, onions, celery and herbs that is baked and eaten with the turkey is called _____.

A big, orange gourd that is eaten in pies at Thanksgiving dinner is called a _____.