# 

**The First Thanksgiving at Plymouth**

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# Lesson Overview:

This lesson will cover the letters of William Bradford and William Hinton from 1620-21 regarding the Plymouth Plantation and the first Thanksgiving. It is appropriate to include this lesson in November in conjunction with a study of the Mayflower, Pilgrims, and Native Americans.

## Lesson Objectives:

* Identify foods eaten at the first Thanksgiving
* Identify who attended the first Thanksgiving

**Grade Level:**

This lesson is appropriate for elementary grades one through five, although it can be easily adapted to kindergarten through sixth grade.

**Length of Lesson:**

This lesson is designed to be completed in two 30 minute class periods with third graders, but it can be easily modified for one or three periods. Extension activities can be used to differentiate instruction, to allow for student choice, or to extend the unit.

## Standards:

#### Key Ideas and Details:

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.1](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RL/3/1/)

Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.3](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RL/3/3/)

Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.

#### Craft and Structure:

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACYRL.3.4](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RL/3/4/)

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, distinguishing literal from nonliteral language.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RL/3/4/)6

Distinguish their own point of view from that of the narrator or those of the characters.

#### Fluency:

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.3.4](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RF/3/4/)

Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.

**Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:**

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.3.4.](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RF/3/4/a/)

Read grade-level text with purpose and understanding.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.3.7](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RI/3/7/)

Use information gained from illustrations (e.g., maps, photographs) and the words in a text to demonstrate understanding of the text (e.g., where, when, why, and how key events occur).

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.3.8](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RI/3/8/)

Describe the logical connection between particular sentences and paragraphs in a text (e.g., comparison, cause/effect, first/second/third in a sequence).

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.3.9](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RI/3/9/)

Compare and contrast the most important points and key details presented in two texts on the same topic.

## Historical Background: Provide relevant background information to put the lesson in context.

“For many Americans, the Thanksgiving meal includes seasonal dishes such as roast turkey with stuffing, cranberry sauce, mashed potatoes and pumpkin pie. The holiday feast dates back to November 1621, when the newly arrived Pilgrims and the Wampanoag Indians at Plymouth for an autumn harvest celebration, an event regarded as America’s “first Thanksgiving.””

Source: History.com https://www.history.com/topics/thanksgiving/first-thanksgiving-meal

## Materials: What materials will be provided in the lesson i.e. documents, organizers, readings?

* Copies of the letters by William Bradford for each child
* Highlighters - two different colors
* Pencil and lined paper
* 9” x 12” construction paper and crayons (optional)
* Venn Diagrams - blank (optional)
* Copies of the William Hilton letter for each child (optional)

## Procedures:

1. Activate background knowledge about the Pilgrims, Mayflower, Native Americans, and other information from the unit.
2. Distribute copies of William Bradford’s letter to students.
3. Teacher reads both the original and the modern versions of the letter aloud.
4. Students partner read the letter.
5. Students highlight information about the Pilgrims in the modern version in one color
6. Students highlight the foods that are listed for the dinner in another color.
7. Assignment: fold paper in half. and label the two columns:
8. Information about the Pilgrims.
9. Foods listed for the dinner

8. Students use the evidence from the highlighted text to fill in the columns.

9. Students staple together their highlighted text and assignment and submit.

**Assessment and Extensions:** How is the student assessed in this lesson and are there any extension activities suggested for building on this lesson?

1. Teachers will assess student learning and mastery by viewing highlighted text and accuracy of assignment.
2. Extension activity - students can illustrate the letter
3. Extension activity - students can contrast and compare foods eaten at

Thanksgiving in 1620 and in 2018 using the Venn Diagram.

4. Extension activity - students can repeat the activities listed above using the

William Hilton letter.

5. Extension activity - students can contrast and compare Bradford’s and Hilton’s letters

using the Venn Diagram.

**Text of Document Excerpts/Source Materials with Citations:**

Source: Pilgrim Hall Museum  
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Source: History.com https://www.history.com/topics/thanksgiving/first-thanksgiving-meal

**PRIMARY SOURCES FOR**

**"THE FIRST THANKSGIVING AT PLYMOUTH”**

**William Bradford, “Of Plimoth Plantation”:**

**In the original 17th century spelling:**

"They begane now to gather in ye small harvest they had, and to fitte up their houses and dwellings against winter, being all well recovered in health & strenght, and had all things in good plenty; fFor as some were thus imployed in affairs abroad, others were excersised in fishing, aboute codd, & bass, & other fish, of which yey tooke good store, of which every family had their portion. All ye somer ther was no want. And now begane to come in store of foule, as winter approached, of which this place did abound when they came first (but afterward decreased by degrees). And besids water foule, ther was great store of wild Turkies, of which they tooke many, besids venison, &c. Besids, they had about a peck a meale a weeke to a person, or now since harvest, Indean corn to yt proportion. Which made many afterwards write so largly of their plenty hear to their freinds in England, which were not fained, but true reports."

**In modern spelling :**

"They began now to gather in the small harvest they had, and to fit up their houses and dwellings against winter, being all well recovered in health and strength and had all things in good plenty. For as some were thus employed in affairs abroad, others were exercised in fishing, about cod and bass and other fish, of which they took good store, of which every family had their portion. All the summer there was no want; and now began to come in store of fowl, as winter approached, of which this place did abound when they came first (but afterward decreased by degrees). And besides waterfowl there was great store of wild turkeys, of which they took many, besides venison, etc. Besides, they had about a peck of meal a week to a person, or now since harvest, Indian corn to that proportion. Which made many afterwards write so largely of their plenty here to their friends in England, which were not feigned but true reports.

The Mayflower arrived in Plymouth in December of 1620. No further ships arrived in Plymouth until immediately after that "First Thanksgiving" - the Fortune arrived in November of 1621. One of the passengers on the Fortune, William Hilton, wrote a letter home that November. Although he was not present at that "First Thanksgiving," he does mention turkeys.

The letter of William Hilton, passenger on the Fortune (The letter was written in November of 1621). From Alexander Young's Chronicles of the Pilgrim Fathers. Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1841.

Loving Cousin,

At our arrival in New Plymouth , in New England, we found all our friends and planters in good health, though they were left sick and weak, with very small means; the Indians round about us peaceable and friendly; the country very pleasant and temperate, yielding naturally, of itself, great store of fruits, as vines of divers sorts in great abundance. There is likewise walnuts, chestnuts, small nuts and plums, with much variety of flowers, roots and herbs, no less pleasant than wholesome and profitable. No place hath more gooseberrries and strawberries, nor better. Timber of all sorts you have in England doth cover the land, that affords beasts of divers sorts, and great flocks of turkey, quails, pigeons and partridges; many great lakes abounding with fish, fowl, beavers, and otters. The sea affords us great plenty of all excellent sorts of sea-fish, as the rivers and isles doth variety of wild fowl of most useful sorts. Mines we find, to our thinking; but neither the goodness nor quality we know. Better grain cannot be than the Indian corn, if we will plant it upon as good ground as a man need desire. We are all freeholders; the rent-day doth not trouble us; and all those good blessings we have, of which and what we list in their seasons for taking. Our company are, for most part, very religious, honest people; the word of God sincerely taught us every Sabbath; so that I know not any thing a contented mind can here want. I desire your friendly care to send my wife and children to me, where I wish all the friends I have in England; and so I rest

Your loving kinsman, William Hilton

**THE 53 PILGRIMS AT THE FIRST THANKSGIVING:**

4 MARRIED WOMEN: Eleanor Billington, Mary Brewster, Elizabeth Hopkins,

Susanna White Winslow.

5 ADOLESCENT GIRLS: Mary Chilton (14), Constance Hopkins (13 or 14), Priscilla Mullins (19), Elizabeth Tilley (14 or15) and Dorothy, the Carver's unnamed maidservant,

perhaps 18 or 19

9 ADOLESCENT BOYS: Francis & John Billington, John Cooke, John Crackston, Samuel Fuller (2d), Giles Hopkins, William Latham, Joseph Rogers, Henry Samson.

13 YOUNG CHILDREN: Bartholomew, Mary & Remember Allerton, Love & Wrestling Brewster, Humility Cooper, Samuel Eaton, Damaris & Oceanus Hopkins, Desire Minter, Richard More, Resolved & Peregrine White.

22 MEN: John Alden, Isaac Allerton, John Billington, William Bradford, William Brewster, Peter Brown, Francis Cooke, Edward Doty, Francis Eaton, [first name unknown] Ely, Samuel Fuller, Richard Gardiner, John Goodman, Stephen Hopkins, John Howland, Edward Lester, George Soule, Myles Standish, William Trevor, Richard Warren, Edward Winslow, Gilbert Winslow.

FAMILY GROUPS:

ALDEN: John

ALLERTON: Isaac with children Bartholomew, Mary, Remember; the Allerton servant William Latham

BILLINGTON: John & Eleanor with sons Francis, John Jr.

BRADFORD: William

BREWSTER: William & Mary with sons Love, Wrestling; their ward Richard More

BROWNE / BROWN: Peter

CARVER: The Carver ward Desire Minter; the Carver servant John Howland; the Carver maidservant Dorothy.

CHILTON: Mary

COOKE: Francis with son John

CRACKSTON: John

EATON: Francis with son Samuel

ELY: Unknown adult man

FULLER: Samuel with nephew Samuel 2d

GARDINER: Richard

GOODMAN: John

HOPKINS: Stephen & Elizabeth with Giles, Constance, Damaris, Oceanus; their servants Edward Doty and Edward Leister.

MULLINS: Priscilla

ROGERS: Joseph

STANDISH: Myles

TILLEY: Elizabeth

TILLEY: Tilley wards Humility Cooper and Henry Samson

TREVOR / TREVORE: William

WARREN: Richard

WINSLOW: Edward & Susanna with her sons Resolved White & Peregrine White; Winslow servant George Soule

WINSLOW: Gilbert

Note: In “Of Plymouth Plantation”,William Bradford lists the Mayflower passengers and also tells us who died during the first winter of 1620/1621 and spring of 1621. No other ships arrived in Plymouth until after the "First Thanksgiving" celebration. The Pilgrims at the "First Thanksgiving" are all the Mayflower survivors.

Source: Pilgrim Hall Museum  
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