

First Thanksgiving Myth or Truth Race

Grade Level: 6+



Overview

In this lesson, students will learn details about the first Thanksgiving, including facts about the Pilgrims' voyage to the new world, how settlers were struggling after arriving, the settlers' relationship with local native Americans, and info on what the first Thanksgiving celebration was truly like.

Lesson Goals

Students should:

1. Gain comprehension of the hardships the Pilgrims suffered on their voyage to this country as well as the difficulties in developing a new settlement.
2. Understand the lifestyle of the Wampanoag Indians and how it differed from the Pilgrims.
3. Learn details about the first feast, what food was served and what the celebration was truly about.

Materials

- Printable cards
- Tape

Teaching the Lesson

Teach the students basic facts about why the Pilgrims came to the New World and the difficulties they faced once they arrived. Review information about the Wampanoag Indians. Discuss the types of food that was at the first Thanksgiving, such as wild fowl (wild turkey), deer meat, and corn porridge.

Print out two copies of each of the cards at the end of this lesson on heavy card stock. If possible, use two different colors of cardstock – one color for each team. Place tape on the back of each card.

You'll also want to print out the list of Facts and Myths. Remember that as you read the statement, you won't tell the students if it is fact or myth until after both teams have answered.

On the chalkboard or whiteboard, draw a vertical line down the center of the board. Divide the class into two teams and appoint a captain for each team. Ask the teams to come up with an appropriate team name that reflects Thanksgiving. It may be a good idea to tell them types of names that won't be allowed, such as anything vulgar or insulting.

Suggest names such as: The Turkeys, Cranberry Winners, or something that ties into the holiday.

Ask each team captain to go to the board and write the team name at the top on their side. Now, pass out one of each card to team captains.

Explain that you will read a sentence. It might be fact and it might be myth. It is up to the team to decide which it is. As soon as the team decides, the captain should race to the board and tape the correct card to the board. First team to tape the correct answer wins a point. The team with the most points at the end of the game wins the game. Give everyone candy and give the winners an extra piece of candy or other reward.

Concluding Activity

Explain to the students that there are a lot of myths surrounding the first Thanksgiving, but that it's important to understand what really happened. Although the reasons people celebrate a holiday might change over time, it's always important to know where we came from and why the holiday started.

Printable pages are on the next page.

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Facts and Myths Statements

Note: Read the statement, but do not tell the students if it is fact or myth until both teams have taped a card to the board.

The first Thanksgiving was held at Plymouth Plantation.
(Fact)

Pilgrims ate cranberries at the first Thanksgiving feast.
(Myth)

Thanksgiving was started to celebrate families.
(Myth)

The Pilgrims ate corn on the cob at the first feast.
(Myth)

The first Thanksgiving was a harvest festival of sorts.
(Fact)

Thanksgiving was made a national holiday in 1863 by Abraham Lincoln.
(Fact)

The Pilgrims came over on the Mayflower.
(Fact)

The first Thanksgiving was held in November.
(Myth – writings indicate it was held in Sept. or Oct.)

The Indians gave the Pilgrims popcorn.
(Myth)

The Pilgrims ate pumpkin pie at the first Thanksgiving.
(Myth)

These statements should get the game started. If you plan to play longer than 20-30 minutes or use the statements as a review for a test, then you may want to come up with additional Fact/Myth statements to add to the list.

