What Is Thanksgiving?

Visual lesson



The secret leaf in the table

Grandpa Rafi slides a hidden wooden board right into the middle of the kitchen table. The table grows longer! Owen peeks underneath in his yellow boots. Nora holds up the empty glass jar. "Why does our table grow bigger today, Grandpa?" she asks.





Harvest time

"Because Thanksgiving is a day for making room and saying thank you," says Grandpa Rafi. Every autumn, farmers gather the ripe pumpkins, corn, and apples that grew all summer. Gathering ripe food is called a harvest.

The Three Sisters garden

Long before any European ships arrived, the Wampanoag people lived along the Massachusetts coast and gave thanks every season. They planted tall corn, beans, and squash together in one little soil hill called the Three Sisters. Look closely at the tall corn stalks!

> **TALK ABOUT IT**
> Look closely at the tall corn stalks. Which plant climbs up them like a ladder?





The three-day harvest of 1621

Yes, the bean vines climb the tall corn, while wide squash leaves keep the soil cool! In autumn 1621, about ninety Wampanoag guests led by Ousamequin and the English newcomers at Plymouth shared a three-day harvest gathering. Wampanoag families still live and share their traditions today.

Letters and two dates

For a long time, different towns picked different thank-you days. Then writer Sarah Josepha Hale wrote letters for thirty-six years until President Lincoln made Thanksgiving a shared US holiday in 1863. Ding-dong! Aunt Clara arrives from Canada, where Thanksgiving happens earlier, in October!





Thanksgiving food detective

Nora and Owen play food detective at Grandpa's kitchen counter! In 1621, people had no forks — Owen giggles, waving a shiny dinner fork like a tiny pitchfork. There was no mashed potato and no pumpkin pie either. Look carefully at the three dishes lined up on the counter!

> **TALK ABOUT IT**
> Which food on the counter WAS served at the 1621 harvest gathering?

Filling the Thankful Jar

Now it is time for the Thankful Jar! Sitting right beside Grandpa Rafi, Nora and Owen use crayons to draw one person or tiny thing they feel grateful for on colorful paper autumn leaves, then drop each leaf into the clear glass jar.





Making room at the table

Tall candles glow safely high in the center of the long extended table as neighbors and cousins pull up chairs. Nora pulls a leaf from the jar and thanks Grandpa for his stories. Saying thank you for our food and helpers makes every single day feel warmer!

TALK ABOUT IT

True or false: We can only say thank you on Thanksgiving Day.

Check your wonder

1 **What does the word harvest mean?**

- **A.** Gathering ripe food that grew all summer
- **B.** Pulling a wooden leaf out of a table
- **C.** Writing letters in winter

2 **In the Three Sisters garden, which plant climbs up the tall corn stalks?**

- **A.** Bean vines
- **B.** Apple trees
- **C.** Pumpkins

3 **When does Aunt Clara's family in Canada celebrate Thanksgiving?**

- **A.** Earlier, in October
- **B.** In the middle of summer
- **C.** On the very same November day as the United States

ANSWERS 1-A 2-A 3-A

1. Yes! Farmers gather ripe corn, pumpkins, and apples at harvest time. 2. That's right! Bean vines curl right up the tall corn like a ladder. 3. Yes! Canada celebrates in October, when its northern harvest finishes earlier.

THE END

Visual lesson



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