

Name _____ Date _____

Thanksgiving

Give Thanks

Learn more about this topic! Each section gives more detail on one of the lyrics from the song. Read each section, and then respond by answering the question or taking notes on key ideas.

1. In September 1620, about 100 English colonists sailed to America on a ship called the Mayflower. These men and women planned to settle in the New World. They wanted to start a new life and build homes in America. Some on board the ship, the Pilgrims, were religious separatists. These were people who wanted to separate from England's church. Religious freedom was not a right in England at the time, so they weren't allowed to practice their beliefs there. Because of this, the Pilgrims decided to leave England. The dangerous journey lasted 66 days. The Mayflower was almost shipwrecked because of strong winds. Despite these gales, the storms and the rough waves, most of the passengers survived the trip.

Notes

2. People onboard the Mayflower first spotted land in early November 1620. They had arrived in Cape Cod Bay, which is now a part of Massachusetts. Their first winter in America was brutal. Most of the colonists stayed on the ship because there was no shelter on the land. It was very cold, and many people got ill. There also was not enough healthy food. By the spring, only about half of the passengers had survived to move to land.

Notes

3. In March of 1621, the colonists moved off the Mayflower. They began to settle a colony, which they called Plymouth. They met a Native American from the Patuxet tribe named Squanto, or Tisquantum. Squanto spoke English because he had been a slave in London, England. The colonists were weak after the hard winter. Squanto offered to help them forge an alliance with the Wampanoag, a tribe of Native Americans. An alliance is a relationship in which people or groups agree to work together. Squanto used his interpretation skills. He translated the Native Americans' language into English. The colonists and Native Americans began to work peacefully together. Members of the tribe taught the colonists how to fish, hunt and grow plants. The colonists then learned to harvest, or collect, the food that they grew, like corn and beans.

Notes

4. The autumn harvest season of 1621 was fruitful. The Plymouth colonists had successfully planted and collected crops to eat. They had a fall feast to celebrate the abundance of food. Members of the Wampanoag tribe joined the colonists for this big meal. The feast lasted for three days. There was plenty to eat, though no record of the exact menu exists. They probably ate fowl, like wild turkey, deer, mussels, ducks, corn, beans, lobster, squash and pumpkin. This grand feast is considered the very first Thanksgiving. The colonists and Native Americans ate together and expressed gratitude for the harvest. They gave thanks for their survival.

Notes

5. Peace between the Plymouth colonists and the Wampanoag tribe lasted for about 50 years. But as more colonists arrived in America from Europe, Native Americans were pushed out of their land. Millions were wiped out by sickness. Many were forced to become slaves. Some Native Americans today think that most Thanksgiving celebrations make it seem as though European colonists were more peaceful with Native Americans than they were. Many Native Americans view Thanksgiving Day as a National Day of Mourning. They use this day to show sadness for the violent conflicts that killed their people.

Notes

6. Today, Americans celebrate Thanksgiving every year on the fourth Thursday of November. It's an official holiday. Much like the Pilgrims did, people express gratitude on this day. It is a holiday for giving thanks for abundance. People show that they are grateful for good things like family, friends, food and health. Many people take time to talk about something specific that they are thankful for. People often have a feast, just like the colonists and Native Americans. The menu usually includes turkey, potatoes, stuffing and pumpkin pie. Cornucopias are popular decorations. These "horns of plenty" are often filled with fruits and vegetables. Many people volunteer to help the poor or sick on Thanksgiving Day. Parades are also a common tradition across the country.

Notes