

## Student Activity

**Title**            **Indians, Pilgrims and the "First Thanksgiving"**  
**Level**            **Grades 6-adult**  
**Time**            **Two or three class periods**

### Objectives

Students will, with the help of primary and secondary historical sources (1) have a more accurate knowledge and deeper understanding of the relationship between the early white settlers and Native peoples of this land, and (2) check the accuracy of what they have been taught about the "First Thanksgiving."

### Materials

Student Resource Sheet #1: William Bradford's Journal

Student Resource Sheet #2: The Saints Come Sailing In

Student Resource Sheet #3: The "First Thanksgiving"

Newsprint or butcher paper, marker

### Procedures

1. Have students tell what they know about the relationship between the Indians and the Pilgrims. Record on newsprint.
2. Pass out Student Resource Sheets #1 and #2.
3. Divide the group into teams of five. Have each team member read two pages in order to discover what relationships between the Indians and the Pilgrims were. Note whether each piece of evidence is from Pilgrims or Indians.
4. Have team members share evidence they have found that relationships between Pilgrims and Indians were good. Then have them share evidence that relationships may not have been good.
5. On newsprint, list in one column evidence found by student that relationships between Indians and Pilgrims were good. In a second column list evidence that the relationships were not so good.
6. Help students come to a consensus about the nature of Indian-Pilgrim relationships. Be sure that they include consideration of whose point of view their information is from as they discuss the evidence found on either side.
7. Have students tell what they know about the "First Thanksgiving." List on newsprint.
8. Pass out Student Resource Sheet #3.
9. Divide group into teams of five. Have students read the three selections to find out which details listed are supported by what they read and which are not.
10. Have team members share information read and respond to the following questions: (a) Which details listed on newsprint are documented in the readings? (b) Was there really a "First Thanksgiving"? (c) Can you find any evidence to support the argument that the account of the "First Thanksgiving" may be made up?
11. Have a general discussion among all students focusing on question 10 (c).

**Title**            **William Bradford's Journal**  
**Activity**        **Indians, Pilgrims and the "First Thanksgiving"**

William Bradford was the contemporary historian of a very small colony. About 100 persons reached Plymouth in the Mayflower in December 1620; thirty years later, at the completion of Governor Bradford's narrative, in 1650, the Plymouth colony still had fewer than 1,000 inhabitants. Book I of the narrative was completed about 1630 and chronicles the events up to the landing at Plymouth. The remainder of the history was written between 1646 and 1651. The manuscript went at Bradford's death to his nephew, who loaned it to several of his contemporaries; it disappeared from the colonies during the Revolutionary War and finally came to light in 1855 in the library of the Bishop of London. Through the efforts of numerous diplomats and historians, the original text was finally returned to America in 1897. It is now on view in the State House, Boston. The portions of the Journal reprinted here are taken from Samuel Eliot Morison's carefully edited version of the manuscript, published in 1963.

(Reprinted with permission from "Discovering a New World: 1493-1754," Volume I of the *Annals of America Series*. Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1968, p. 65.)

After this they chose, or rather confirmed, Mr. John Carver (a man godly and well approved amongst them) their Governor for that year. And after they had provided a place for their goods, or common store (which were long in unloading for want of boats; foulness of the winter weather and sickness of divers) and begun some small cottages for their habitation; as time would admit, they met and consulted of laws and orders, both for their civil and military government as the necessity of their condition did require, still adding thereunto as urgent occasion in several times, and as cases did require.

In these hard and difficult beginnings they found some discontents and murmurings arise amongst some, and mutinous speeches and carriage in other; but they were soon quelled and overcome by the wisdom, patience, and just and equal carriage of things, by the Governor and better part, which clave faithfully together in the main.

### **[The Starving Time]**

But that which was most sad and lamentable was, that in two or three months' time half of their company died, especially in January and February, being the depth of winter, and wanting houses and other comforts; being infected with the scurvy and other diseases which this long voyage and their inaccommodate condition had brought upon them. So as there died sometimes two or three of a day in the foresaid time, that of 100 and odd persons, scarce fifty remained. And of these, in the time of most distress, there was but six or seven sound persons who to their great commendations, be it spoken, spared no pains night nor day, but with abundance of toil and hazard of their own health, fetched them wood, made them fires, dressed them meat, made their beds, washed their loathsome clothes, clothed and unclothed them. In a word, did all the homely and necessary offices for them which dainty and queasy stomachs cannot endure to hear named; and all this willingly and cheerfully, without any grudging in the least, showing herein their true love unto their friends and brethren; a rare example and worthy to be remembered. Two of these seven were Mr. William Brewster, their reverend Elder, and Myles Standish, their Captain and military commander, unto whom myself and many others were much beholden in our low and sick condition: And yet the Lord so upheld these persons as in this general calamity they were not at all infected either with sickness or lameness. And what I have said of these I may say of many others who died in this general visitation, and others yet living; that whilst they had health, yea, or any strength continuing, were not wanting to any that had need of them. And I doubt not but their recompense is with the Lord.

## [Indian Relations]

All this while the Indians came skulking about them and would sometimes show themselves aloof off, but when any approached near them, they would run away; and once they stole away their tools where they had been at work and were gone to dinner. But about the 16th of March, a certain Indian came boldly amongst them and spoke to them in broken English, which they could well understand but marveled at it. At length they understood by discourse with him, that he was not of these parts but belonged to the eastern parts where some English ships came to fish, with whom he was acquainted and could name sundry of them by their names, amongst whom he had got his language. He became profitable to them in acquainting them with many things concerning the state of the country in the east parts where he lived, which was afterward profitable unto them; as also of the people here, of their names, number and strength, of their situation and distance from this place, and who was chief amongst the. His name was Samoset. He told them also of another Indian whose name was Squanto, a native of this place, who had been in England and could speak better English than himself.

Being, after some time of entertainment and gifts dismissed, a while after he came again, and five more with him, and they brought again all the tools that were stolen away before, and made way for the coming of their great Sachem, Massasoit. Who, about four or five days after, came with the chief of his friends and other attendance, with the aforesaid Squanto. With whom, after friendly entertainment and some gifts given him, they made a peace with him (which hath now continued this 24 years) in these terms:

1. That neither he nor any of his should injure or do hurt to any of their people.
2. That if any of his did hurt to any of theirs, he should send the offender, that they might punish him.
3. That if anything were taken away from any of theirs, he should cause it to be restored; and they should do the like to his.
4. If any did unjustly war against him, they would aid him; if any did war against them, he should aid them.
5. He should send to his neighbors confederates to certify them of this, that they might not wrong them, but might be likewise comprised in the conditions of peace.
6. That when their men came to them, they should leave their bows and arrows behind them.

After these things, he returned to his place called Sowams, some 40 miles from this place, but Squanto continued with them and was their interpreter and was a special instrument sent of God for their good beyond their expectation. He directed them how to set their corn, where to take fish, and to procure other commodities, and was also their pilot to bring them to unknown places for their profit, and never left them till he died.

The spring now approaching, it pleased God the mortality began to cease amongst them, and the sick and lame recovered apace, which put as [it] were new life into them, though they had borne their sad affliction with much patience and contentedness as I think any people could do. But it was the Lord which upheld them, and had beforehand prepared them; many having long borne the yoke, yea from their youth. Many other smaller matters I omit, sundry of them having been already published in a journal made by one of their company, and some other passages of journeys and relations already published, to which I refer those that are willing to know them more particularly.

And now being come to the 25th of March, I shall begin the year 1621.