

 **THANKSGIVING**© talkmor.com**B1–C1 • Reading and Analysis**

Read the article and analyse how a national holiday can hold different meanings at the same time.

Thanksgiving: Tradition, Memory, and Meaning

For many people in the United States, Thanksgiving is a day associated with travel, family gatherings, shared food, and gratitude. A familiar image is a crowded table with turkey and seasonal dishes. Other traditions include parades, American football, volunteering, or simply taking a break from work. These practices are common, but they are not universal: some people spend the day alone, work through it, or do not celebrate it at all.

The holiday is often connected to a harvest gathering in 1621 at Plymouth, where English colonists and Wampanoag people were present. The surviving written evidence is limited, and the event should not be treated as a complete account of the holiday's origins. Indigenous peoples across North America had diverse societies, food systems, ceremonies, and traditions of gratitude long before European arrival. The colonial period that followed included land dispossession, warfare, disease, and policies that deeply harmed Native communities.

Thanksgiving became a national holiday through a much longer history. In 1863, during the American Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed a national day of Thanksgiving. Over time, school lessons, public ceremonies, advertising, and family customs helped shape the holiday's popular image. These stories can create a sense of shared identity, but they can also leave out voices and experiences that complicate the national narrative.

For some Native people, the fourth Thursday in November is observed as a National Day of Mourning, a time to remember Indigenous ancestors and the consequences of colonization. Others may celebrate Thanksgiving, observe it in a different way, or hold mixed feelings about it. There is no single Indigenous response. Recognising these differences does not require people to reject gratitude or family connection; it asks them to consider whose stories are told, whose are missing, and how public traditions can make room for historical truth.

A. Analyse the text

1. Identify the article's main argument in one sentence.
2. Give two examples of contemporary Thanksgiving traditions.
3. Why does the article caution against treating 1621 as the complete origin story?
4. What roles did public ceremonies, education, and advertising play in shaping the holiday's image?
5. How does the article avoid presenting Indigenous people as a single group with one opinion?

B. Word choice and tone

1. Why might the author use "popular image" instead of "the true story"?
2. Find a phrase that signals limits in the historical evidence.
3. Does the article sound celebratory, critical, or balanced? Support your answer with two details.

C. Short response

In 120–150 words, explain how a public holiday can build community while also raising difficult questions about history and memory.

Teacher Key

Thanksgiving has familiar contemporary traditions but also complex historical meanings; examples vary; evidence is limited and colonial history extends far beyond one gathering; public education and ceremonies popularised particular narratives; the article notes varied Indigenous responses. “Popular image” signals a commonly repeated representation; “surviving written evidence is limited” marks evidential limits; a balanced tone includes customs and historical harms.