

A Cornucopia of Thanksgiving

Theme: All of the symbols of Thanksgiving have specific meanings and the Pilgrims were grateful for all that the Native Americans did to help them survive.

Characters

History Professor- Henry

Genealogy Professor- Suhrid

Newspaper Reporter- Olivia

Mathematics Professor- Kinzley

English Professor- Hayden

Contextual Professor- Reagan

Archeology Professor- Echo

Setting: A group of professors have gathered together to meet with a newspaper reporter at the local university. The reporter is writing an article about the symbols of Thanksgiving and has asked the professors for their help.

Olivia Newspaper Reporter: Hello Professors! Thank you for meeting with me today. As I explained over the phone, I am writing a very important article about the symbols of Thanksgiving.

Suhrid Genealogy Professor: We appreciate you contacting our university. We have been studying the genealogy of the pilgrim's ancestors all the way back to when they first arrived on the Mayflower in 1620.

Hayden English Professor: We have also done extensive research on William Bradford's journal writings and have learned some interesting things.

Echo Archeology Professor: We also have taken core samples of the dirt around Plymouth Colony to understand the Pilgrims' lives even further.

Olivia Reporter: Wonderful! I was hoping that we could start with some of the symbols of Thanksgiving.

Henry History Professor: We will want to mention turkeys, corn, and pumpkins.

Kinzley Math Professor: Don't forget the cornucopia! That 'horn of plenty' basket helped them to gather and count all their fruits and vegetables.

Suhrid Genealogy Professor: We can't just focus on symbols, we also need to focus on an entire people, the Native Americans who helped to save the Pilgrims by helping them to learn how to survive.

Henry History Professor: That is so true, Thanksgiving is not just about the symbols from days gone past, it is also a time to recall acts of kindness from many years ago.

Kinzley Math Professor: Those acts of generosity saved the Pilgrims. Many caught scurvy and died in the first few months of being in the New World. In fact, more than half of the original Pilgrims died in the first five months. There were only about 50 Pilgrims still alive by the time that the Native American Indians discovered them.

Echo Archeology Professor: There weren't enough plants with vitamin C; that is why they caught scurvy.

Hayden English Professor: William Bradford recorded in his journal that there were two Indians who helped the Pilgrims most of all. One was named Samoset and he came first, he could speak English words, so they were able to have some simple conversations with him.

Reagan Anglican Professor- Samoset learned some basic words from fishermen off the coast of Monhegan Island. In fact, all the boat captains knew him by name.

Olivia Newspaper Reporter: But the only Native American that I have heard of is Squanto...

Suhrid Genealogy Professor: Squanto came about two weeks after Samoset, he had heard about the Pilgrims from Samoset.

Hayden English Professor: William Bradford wrote in his journal that Squanto spoke much better English. The Pilgrims hosted him and gave him a gift for coming. Squanto helped them to write a set of rules for the area that would help the Native Americans and the Pilgrims to live peacefully with one another.

Reagan Anglican Professor- The reason that Squanto spoke better English was that he had been kidnapped more than 10 years before and brought to Spain to be a slave. He was bought by a Spanish Monk who was kind to him and allowed him the freedom to leave. Squanto then travelled from Spain to England where he worked in a rich man's horse stables and learned to speak English well. The stable owner promised to help find a boat that would take Squanto back to his home. Finally, Squanto was able to get back home.

Kinzley Math Professor: It was good that Squanto was there when the pilgrims were discovered by the Native Americans. Squanto could count their numbers. He knew that they were weak and in trouble without his help.

Henry History Professor: That is why he got right to work and helped them to learn how to plant corn, pumpkins, and squash that could grow during the summer.

Kinzley Math Professor: The odds of growing food were much better and would yield more food than just hunting alone. Squanto also taught them that beans would grow up the corn stalks, so they could have twice as many vegetables harvested from the same space.

Olivia Newspaper Reporter: Okay, I'll be sure to mention corn, pumpkins, squash, and beans in my article. But how did turkeys end up being a part of Thanksgiving?

Hayden English Professor: Actually, it should have been deer, fish, and turkeys, but William Bradford only mentioned turkeys in his journal near the time of the fall feast, he said:

“Winter is creeping closer, yet, this time our stomachs are full, and our bodies are strong. We’ve been gathering the harvest; there has also been great store of turkeys, and a plentiful of Indian corn.”

Echo Archeology Professor: From plant and animal remains in the soil, we can see that the Pilgrims ate a lot of deer- perhaps even more deer than turkeys.

Henry History Professor: Whether it was deer or turkey or both, it seemed natural to have a feast at harvest time to celebrate the plenty after months of suffering and loss.

Suhrid Genealogy Professor: It isn't hard to imagine how grateful the Pilgrims were after months struggling so hard to survive.

Reagan Anglican Professor- ...and how grateful they were for Squanto who helped them adapt to this new land and survive. They also believed that God would help them since they came to America for religious liberty.

Hayden English Professor: William Bradford expressed his feelings by stating:

“All we have to do is pray, survive to the best of our ability, and leave this is God's hands.”

Kinzley Math Professor: And they did survive, they grew strong with the help of the Native Americans and they helped each other in the land.

Suhrid Genealogy Professor: Yes, there were wars and arguments between the European settlers and the Indians years later, but the two original groups honored their agreements. In fact, Squanto loved the Pilgrims so much that he stayed with them until his death.

Henry History Professor: Yes, they helped each other and succeeded together.

Echo Archeology Professor: They sure did succeed!

Olivia News Reporter: And we can do the same, as we work together...in fact...I think that I'll make that the angle of my article! That as we remember the symbols of Thanksgiving and honor the first Thanksgiving in our hearts and through kind actions, we can all be successful too!