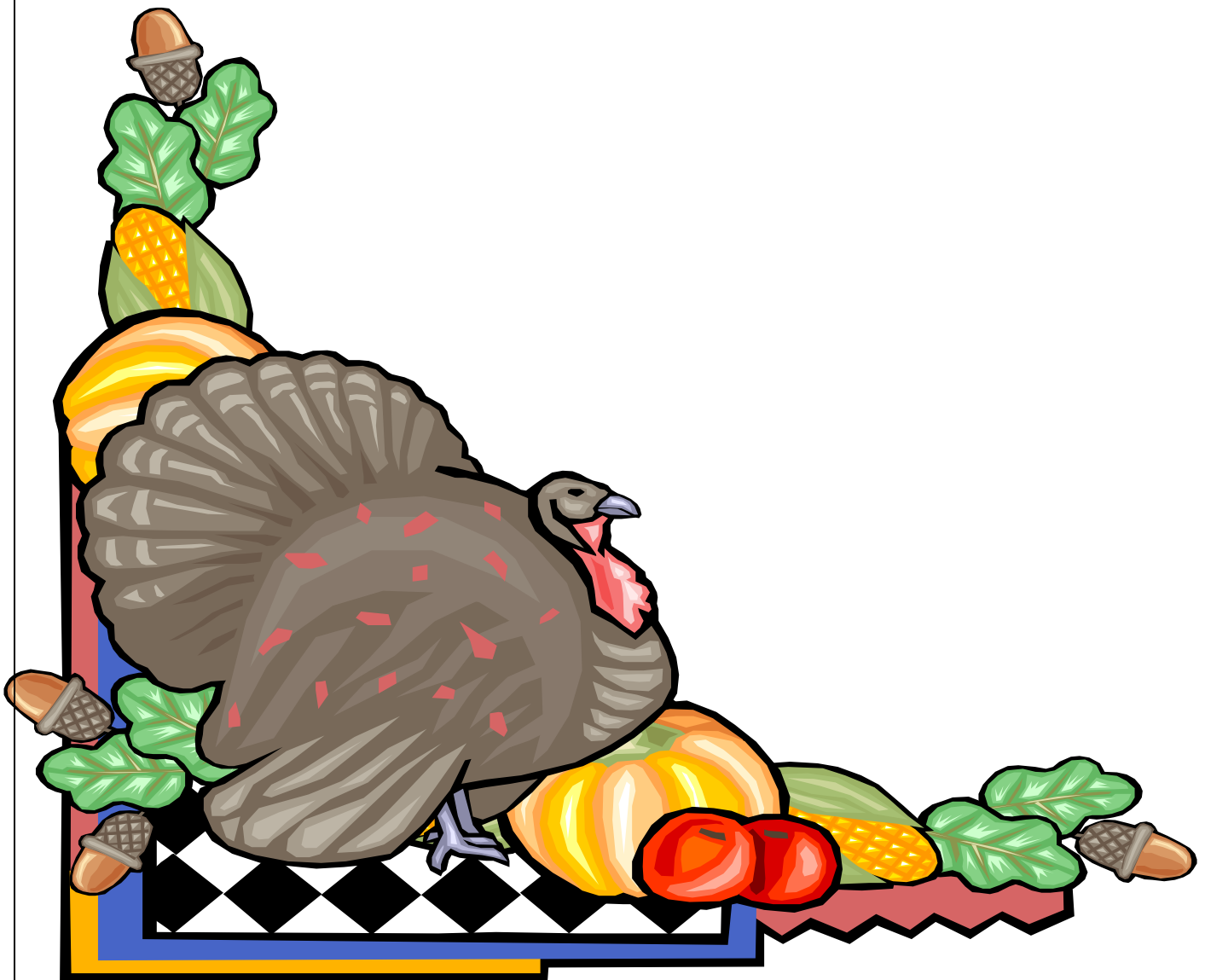


St Aiden's Homeschool

South Africa

Thanksgiving Poems & Recitals for Children



PREFACE

This book contains a selection of well-known traditional Thanksgiving poems, songs and recitals that children who celebrate Thanksgiving are familiar with.

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When Father Carved the Turk

by Charles Noel Douglas

Ma always did the carving in the old days on the farm
 When roasted bird at meals occurred she'd slice it to a charm;
 But last Thanksgiving Father said, when Ma was carving ducks,
 Her cooking, though 'twas passable, she couldn't carve for shucks.
 Dad said agen, he noticed when a chicken came on deck,
 Though all the rest got legs or breast, he always got the neck;
 Henceforth he'd wield the knife himself, and now I'll go to work,
 Events I'll trace, tell what took place when Father carved the "turk."

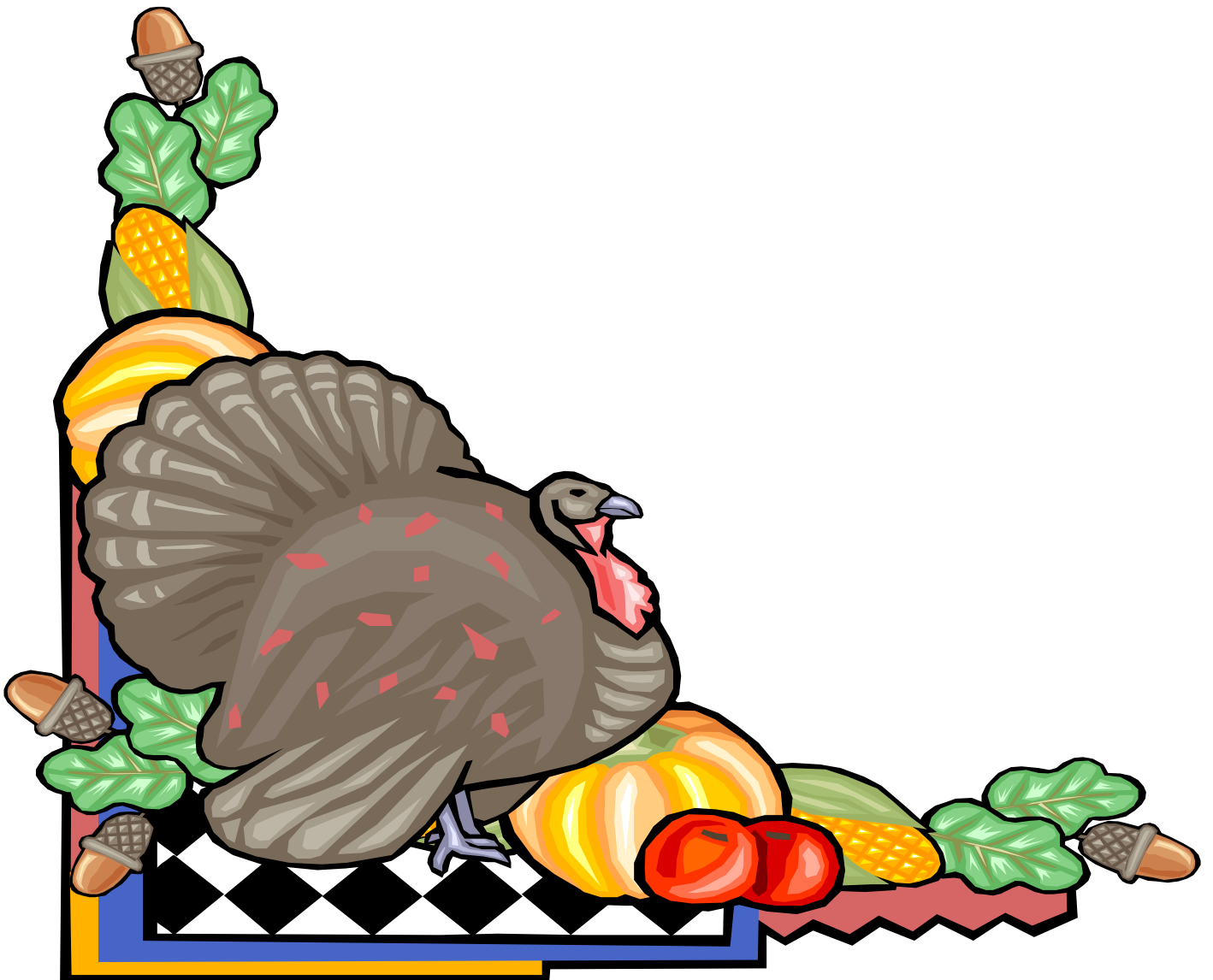
Christmas mighty soon rolled round, and Dick and me and Sue
 Had fixed a little game on Pop, and Ma was in it, too -
 We had a turkey on the farm, I'd heard Dad oft remark
 He'd pledge his word that very bird came out of Noah's ark.
 We chloroformed the gobbler, and though for hours we tried,
 No ax or gun (we tried a ton) would penetrate his hide.
 When in the oven birdie went Mom whispered, with a smirk,
 There'll be some fun for every one when Father carves the "turk."

'Twas Christmas day, the table gay with fixings for the feast,
 And ev'ry guest dressed in his best, a score of them at least;
 A hungry horde sat round the board as Dad took up his knife,
 All sharpened like a razor, for the battle of his life.
 Hushed was the din as Ma brought in the gobbler, brown and slick-
 Mom winked at me, I winked at Sue and Sue she winked at Dick;
 All bowed their heads as grace was said by Reverend Joseph Burke,
 Then still as death we held our breath while Father carved the "turk."

Dad shed his coat and bared his throat, and then he butted in,
 The gobbler's hide to cut he tried, but couldn't pierce the skin ;
 Its breast he jabbed, its neck he stabbed, and gave it such a slap
 It went right swish clean off the dish and flopped in Sal Smith's lap.
 'Twas soon put back, again Dad hacked; oh, things were going some!
 When Dad's knife slipped and off it whipped the top of Father's thumb;
 Dad stomped the floor, and strange oaths swore, while Reverend Mr. Burke
 Begged Heaven, in prayer, our lives to spare while Father carved the "turk."

We fixed the old man's damaged thumb, then Dad, sad to relate,
 Upon the table knelt and chased the turkey round the plate;
 One knee was on the gobbler's breast, the other in the pie,
 While gravy flew on me and Sue and hit the ceiling high,
 We ducked beneath the table, 'twas the safest place to go,
 While Pop was wrestling up on deck we breathed a prayer below;
 Then came a crash, an awful smash; in my brain long 'twill lurk;
 That deafening roar, when on the floor, went Father and the "turk."

We scrambled out and picked Dad up; you should have seen him prance -
The carving knife lodged in his shoe, the fork stuck in his pants,
His face was smeared with grease, his beard and whiskers full of pie,
Ere he could see Ma dug out three potatoes from his eye.
Then old "Doc" Jupp patched father up, and said 'twas very plain
He'd turkeyitis of the pants and gravy on the brain-
Another gobbler soon was cooked and each one went to work,
And ate, you bet, but don't forget 'twas Mother carved the "turk."



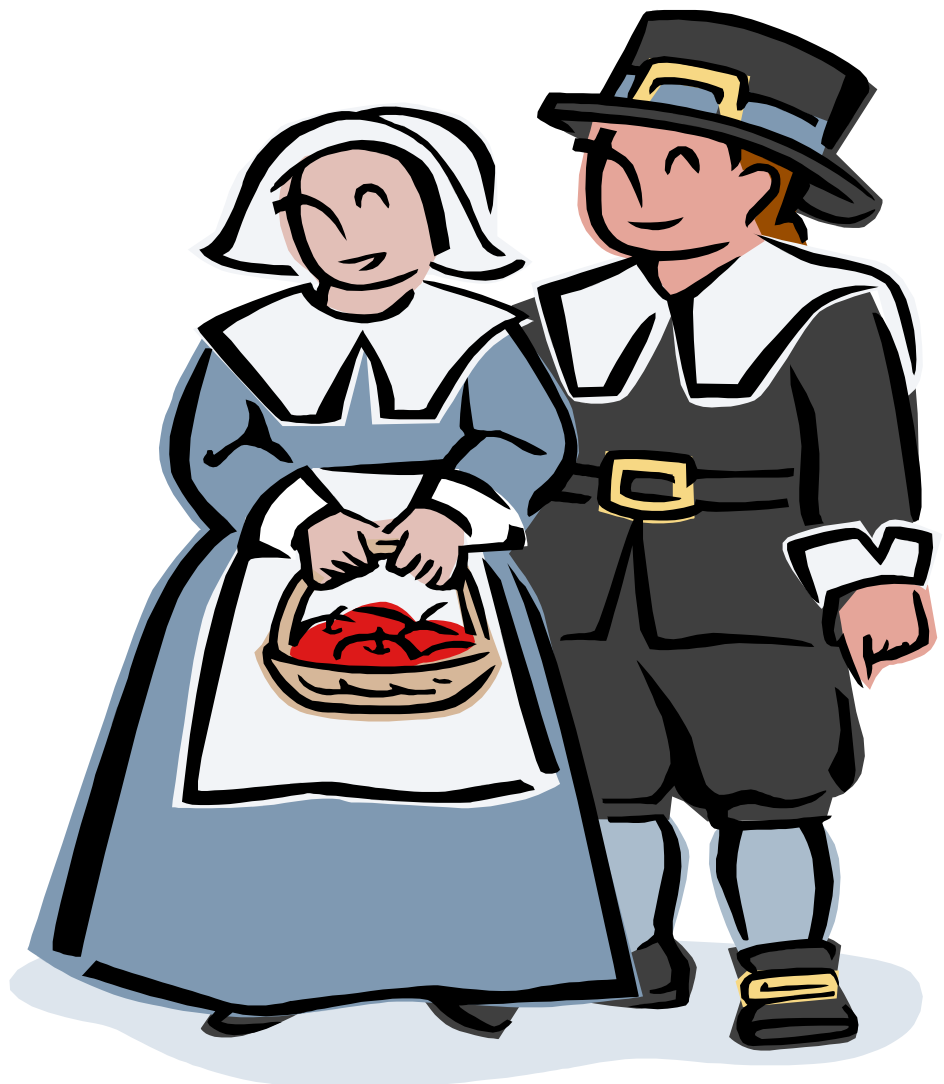
The Pilgrims Came

by Annette Wynne

The Pilgrims came across the sea,
And never thought of you and me;
And yet it's very strange the way
We think of them Thanksgiving day.

We tell their story, old and true
Of how they sailed across the blue,
And found a new land to be free
And built their homes quite near the sea.

Every child knows well the tale
Of how they bravely turned the sail
And journeyed many a day and night,
To worship God as they thought right.



Thanksgiving Time

by Author Unknown

When all the leaves are off the boughs,
And nuts and apples gathered in,
And cornstalks waiting for the cows,
And pumpkins safe in barn and bin,
Then Mother says, "My children dear,
The fields are brown, and autumn flies;
Thanksgiving Day is very near,
And we must make thanksgiving pies!"



Thanksgiving Observance

by Author Unknown

Count your blessings instead of your crosses;
Count your gains instead of your losses.
Count your joys instead of your woes;
Count your friends instead of your foes.
Count your smiles instead of your tears;
Count your courage instead of your fears.
Count your full years instead of your lean;
Count your kind deeds instead of your mean.
Count your health instead of your wealth;
Count on God instead of yourself.



Giving Thanks

by Author Unknown

Giving Thanks

For the hay and the corn and the wheat that is reaped,
For the labor well done, and the barns that are heaped,
For the sun and the dew and the sweet honeycomb,
For the rose and the song and the harvest brought home -
Thanksgiving! Thanksgiving!

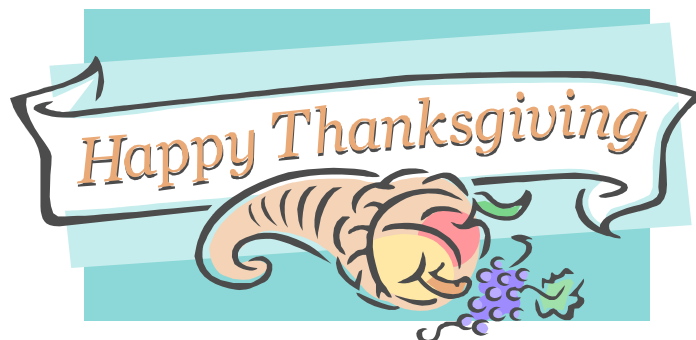
For the trade and the skill and the wealth in our land,
For the cunning and strength of the workingman's hand,
For the good that our artists and poets have taught,
For the friendship that hope and affection have brought -
Thanksgiving! Thanksgiving!

For the homes that with purest affection are blest,
For the season of plenty and well-deserved rest,
For our country extending from sea unto sea;
The land that is known as the "Land of the Free" -
Thanksgiving! Thanksgiving!



The First Thanksgiving

by Margaret Junkin Preston



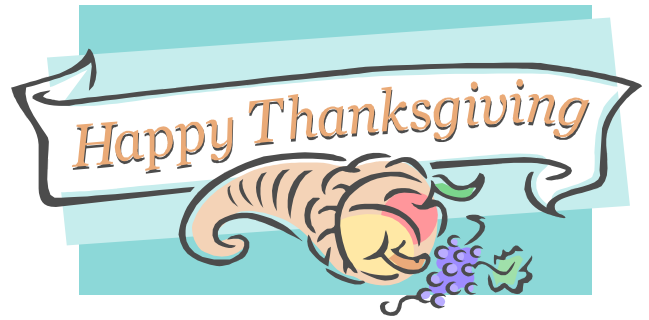
"And now," said the Governor,
gazing abroad on the piled-up store
Of the sheaves that dotted the clearings
and covered the meadows o'er,
"Tis meet that we render praises
because of this yield of grain;
Tis meet that the Lord of the harvest
be thanked for his sun and rain."

"And, therefore, I, William Bradford
(by the grace of God today,
And the franchise of this good people),
Governor of Plymouth, say,
Through virtue of vested power--
ye shall gather with one accord,
And hold, in the month of November,
thanksgiving unto the Lord."

"He hath granted us peace and plenty,
and the quiet we've sought so long;
He hath thwarted the wily savage,
and kept him from wrack and wrong;
And unto our feast the Sachem shall be bidden,
that he may know
We worship his own Great Spirit,
who maketh the harvests grow."

"So shoulder your matchlocks, masters--
there is hunting of all degrees;
And, fishermen, take your tackle,
and scour for spoils the seas;
And, maidens and dames of Plymouth,
your delicate crafts employ
To honor our First Thanksgiving,
and make it a feast of joy!"

"We fail of the fruits and dainties--
we fail of the old home cheer;
Ah, these are the lightest losses,
mayhap, that befall us here;
But see, in our open clearings,
how golden the melons lie;
Enrich them with sweets and spices,
and give us the pumpkin-pie!"



So, bravely the preparations went on
for the autumn feast;
The deer and the bear were slaughtered;
wild game from the greatest to least
Was heaped in the colony cabins;
brown home-brew served for wine,
And the plum and the grape of the forest,
for orange and peach and pine.

At length came the day appointed;
the snow had begun to fall,
But the clang from the meeting-house belfry
rang merrily over all,
And summoned the folk Of Plymouth,
who hastened with glad accord
To listen to Elder Brewster
as he fervently thanked the Lord.

In his seat sate Governor Bradford;
men, matrons, and maidens fair,
Miles Standish and all his soldiers,
with corselet and sword, were there;
And sobbing and tears and gladness
had each in its turn the sway,
For the grave of the sweet Rose Standish
o'ershadowed Thanksgiving Day.

And when Massasoit, the Sachem,
sate down with his hundred braves,
And ate of the varied riches
of gardens and woods and waves,
And looked on the granaried harvest--
with a blow on his brawny chest,
He muttered, "The good Great Spirit
loves his white children best!"

NOTES AND QUESTIONS

Biographical and Historical Note:

Margaret J. Preston (1820-1897) was one of the leading poets of the South. She wrote many poems and sketches. "The First Thanksgiving Day" gives a good picture of the life in the old Pilgrim days.

The Pilgrims landed at Plymouth December 21, 1620. During the long, hard winter fifty-one of the one hundred Pilgrims died, among them being Rose Standish, wife of Captain Miles Standish. As soon as spring came, the colonists planted their fields, and by the end of summer a plentiful harvest was gathered in. When provisions and fuel had been laid in for the winter, Governor Bradford appointed a day of thanksgiving. Venison, wild fowl, and fish were easy to obtain. We are told, "there was great store of wild turkeys, of

which they took many." For three days a great feast was spread, and Massasoit, the Indian Sachem, or chief, and many of his people enjoyed it with the colonists.

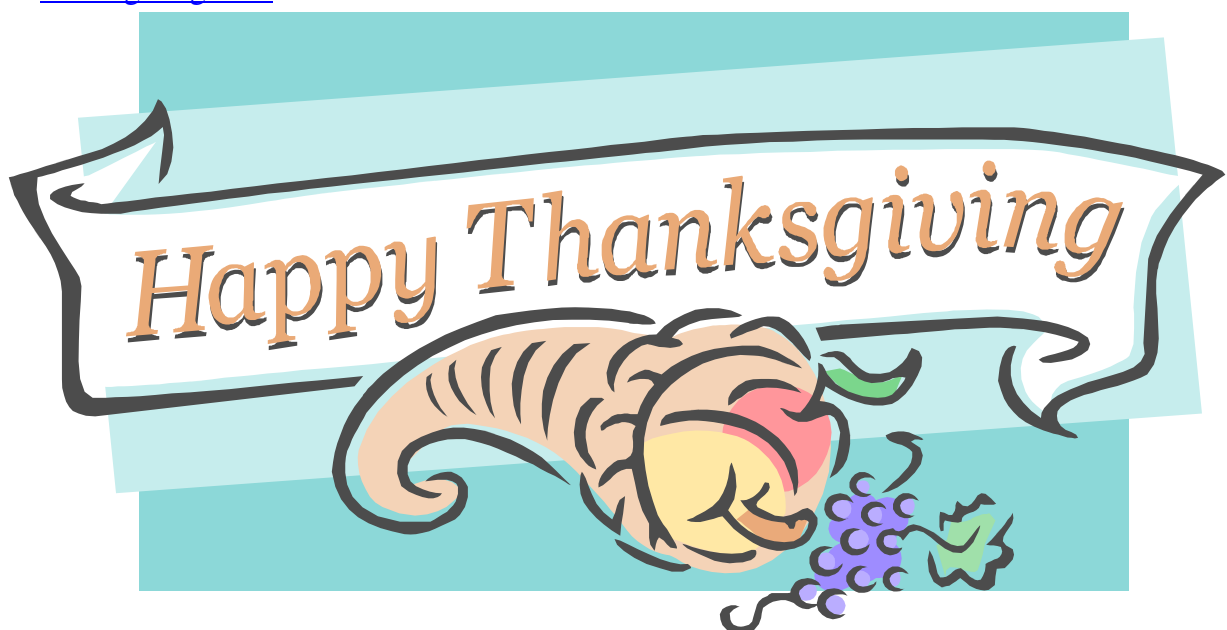
Discussion:

1. When did the events related in this story take place?
2. Who was the governor of Plymouth at this time?
3. What proclamation did he make?
4. What did the governor say that God had done for the colony?
5. Who did he say should be invited to the feast?
6. What meat did the Pilgrims have at their first Thanksgiving dinner?
7. What fruits did they have for the feast?
8. What fruit is meant by "pine" in line 12, page 93?
9. What did the colonists do "with glad accord" before they sat down to their feast?
10. Find the lines that tell what Massasoit said when he ate of the feast.
11. Why is it a good thing for America to have a day set apart each year for us to give thanks for our blessings?
12. Find in the Glossary the meaning of store; sheaves; clearings; wrack; dames; mayhap; befall; slaughtered; appointed; summoned; fervently; sate; braves; brawny.
13. Pronounce: therefore; franchise; wily; Sachem, pumpkin; matrons; corselet; Massasoit; granaried.

Phrases for Study

'tis meet, scour for spoils, franchise of this good people, delicate crafts employ, virtue of vested power, fail of the fruits, with one accord, home-brew served for wine, thwarted the wily savage, each in its turn the sway, Great Spirit, o'ershadowed Thanksgiving Day, shoulder your matchlocks, of all degrees, varied riches.

<http://www.apples4theteacher.com/holidays/thanksgiving/poems-rhymes/the-first-thanksgiving.html>



The Landing of the Pilgrims by Felicia Dorothea Hemans

The breaking waves dashed high,
On a stern and rock-bound coast,
And the woods against a stormy sky
Their giant branches tossed;

And the heavy night hung dark
The hills and waters o'er,
When a band of exiles moored their bark
On the wild New England shore.

Not as the conqueror comes,
They, the true-hearted came;
Not with the roll of the stirring drums,
And the trumpet that sings of fame;

Not as the flying come,
In silence and in fear;--
They shook the depths of the desert gloom
With their hymns of lofty cheer.

Amidst the storm they sang,
And the stars heard, and the sea;
And the sounding aisles of the dim woods rang
To the anthem of the free!

The ocean eagle soared
From his nest by the white wave's foam;
And the rocking pines of the forest roared--
This was their welcome home!

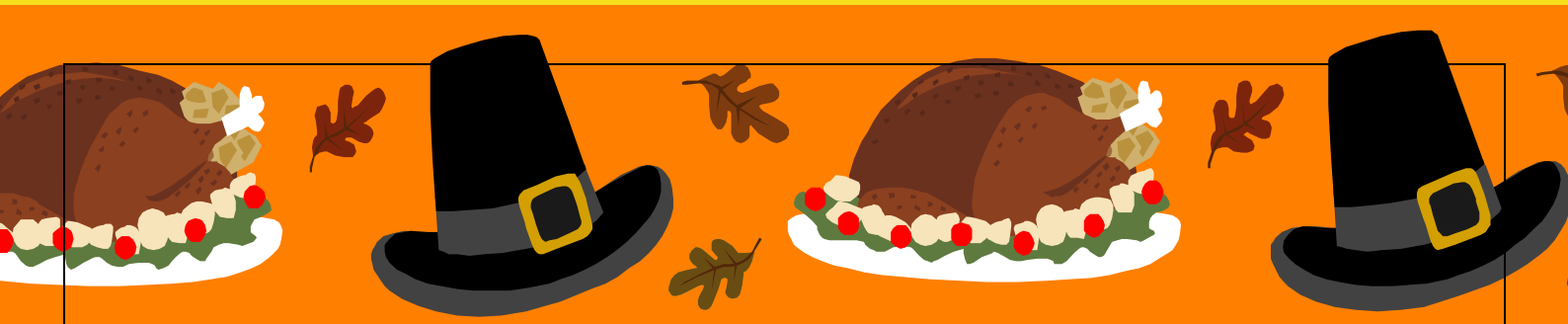
There were men with hoary hair
Amidst that pilgrim band:
Why had they come to wither there,
Away from their childhood's land?

There was woman's fearless eye,
Lit by her deep love's truth;
There was manhood's brow serenely high,
And the fiery heart of youth.

What sought they thus afar?
Bright jewels of the mine?
The wealth of seas, the spoils of war?--
They sought a faith's pure shrine!

Ay, call it holy ground,
The soil where first they trod.
They have left unstained what there they found--
Freedom to worship God.





A Thanksgiving Fable

by Oliver Herford

It was a hungry pussy cat,
upon Thanksgiving morn,
And she watched a thankful little mouse,
that ate an ear of corn.

"If I ate that thankful little mouse,
how thankful he should be,
When he has made a meal himself,
to make a meal for me!

"Then with his thanks for having fed,
and his thanks for feeding me,
With all his thankfulness inside,
how thankful I shall be!"

Thus mused the hungry pussy cat,
upon Thanksgiving Day;
But the little mouse had overheard
and declined (with thanks) to stay.



Thanksgiving Comes But Once a Year

by Thornton W. Burgess

Thanksgiving comes but once a year,
But when it comes it brings good cheer.
For in my storehouse on this day
Are piles of good things hid away.
Each day I've worked from early morn
To gather acorns, nuts, and corn,
Till now I've plenty and to spare
Without a worry or a care.
So light of heart the whole day long,
I'll sing a glad Thanksgiving song."



Thanksgiving Day

by Lydia Maria Child

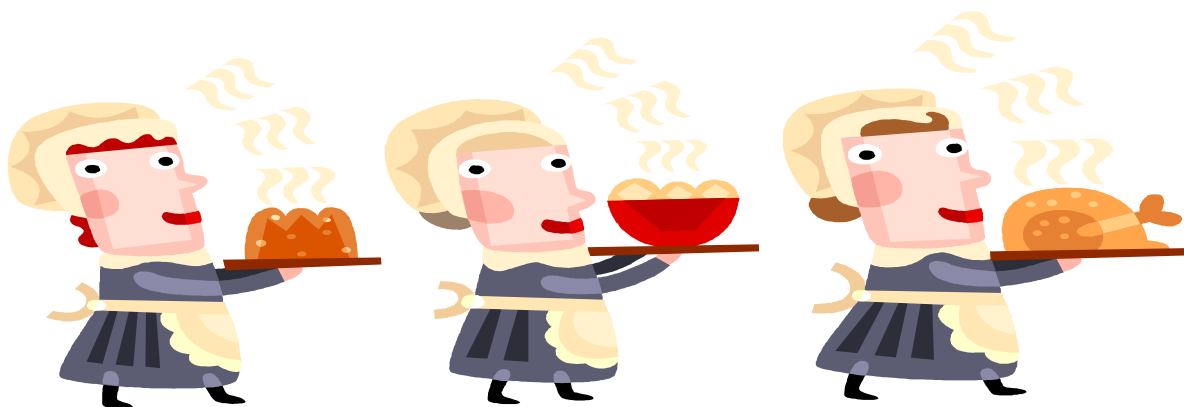
Over the river and through the wood,
To Grandfather's house we go;
The horse knows the way
To carry the sleigh
Through the white and drifted snow.

Over the river and through the wood,
Oh, how the wind does blow!
It stings the toes,
And bites the nose,
As over the ground we go.

Over the river and through the wood,
Trot fast, my dapple gray!
Spring over the ground,
Like a hunting hound,
For this is Thanksgiving-Day.

Over the river and through the wood,
And straight through the barnyard gate!
We seem to go
Extremely slow,
It is so hard to wait!

Over the river and through the wood;
Now Grandmother's cap I spy!
Hurrah for the fun!
Is the pudding done?
Hurrah for the pumpkin pie!



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Subject: Thanksgiving Poems & Recitals for Children
Author: DONNETTE DAVIS
Keywords: Thanksgiving Poems & Recitals for Children
Comments: Thanksgiving Poems & Recitals for Children. Selection of Well-known Thanksgiving poems and recitals for children. 2008
Donnette E Davis
Creation Date: 10/14/2008 10:46:00 PM
Change Number: 5
Last Saved On: 10/17/2008 7:11:00 PM
Last Saved By: DONNETTE DAVIS
Total Editing Time: 37 Minutes
Last Printed On: 10/17/2008 7:12:00 PM
As of Last Complete Printing
Number of Pages: 15
Number of Words: 2,067 (approx.)
Number of Characters: 11,784 (approx.)