

A promotional graphic for Mariposa READ. It features a silver microphone on a stand on the left and an open book on a wooden surface in the foreground. The background is a blue gradient with white butterflies. Text includes the program name, dates, and instructions for listening and accessing transcripts.

Mariposa READ
(Read, Enjoy, And Discover)

Thursday, December 1, 2022 at 7:30 PM
Sunday, December 4, 2022 at 2:30 PM

Thanksgiving Around the World

To listen, tune in to KRYZ Radio or log onto www.kryzradio.org

For Transcripts:

- Go to the event on our Facebook Page: Mariposa Adult & Family Literacy
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Thanksgiving Around the World

Last Thursday we celebrated Thanksgiving in the United States and here on Mariposa READ we read about the history and customs of Thanksgiving in our country. There are many countries that have their own Thanksgiving traditions. The indigenous peoples of North America are referred to as Native Americans in the United States and First Nations in Canada. They have been enjoying harvest festivals long before any Europeans arrived. But the first Thanksgiving celebration in North America was held in Canada. Martin Frobisher was an English navigator, and he led an expedition to Canada in 1578. When they arrived, they gave thanks for the safety of their arrival in a ceremony called Nunavut. In 1879 Canada's Parliament established Thanksgiving Day as November 6. In 1957 it was changed to the second Monday in October. Today, Canadian Thanksgiving customs look very similar to American ones. During our Revolutionary War, many Loyalists moved to Canada and introduced them to having turkey and that tradition continued. The Canadian Football League holds an annual Thanksgiving Day Classic. So many Canadian families eat turkey and watch football just like many American families.

The Loyalists weren't the only ones who took the American tradition of Thanksgiving to other parts of the world. Norfolk Island is a remote island in the Pacific Ocean. It was once a British penal colony but is now an Australian territory. In the mid-1890's an American trader named Isaac Robinson wanted to do business with some American whalers that were in the area. He put on an American-style Thanksgiving service in the All Saints Church in Kingston. They

continue to celebrate the holiday on the last Wednesday of November each year. The parishioners bring fruits, vegetables, and cornstalks to decorate the church and they sing American hymns on that day.

Another island to which Americans took their celebrations is Grenada. Grenada is a West Indian island, north of Venezuela in the Caribbean Sea. In 1983, Grenada had a socialist leader named Maurice Bishop who put the island under martial law. On October 25, 1983, the U.S. military invaded Grenada to help restore order. While the U.S. soldiers were there, they told local citizens about the upcoming American holiday and its traditions. To show their gratitude, many Grenadians invited the U.S. soldiers to dine with them and surprised them with non-native foods such as turkey, cranberry, and potatoes. Many Grenadians continue to celebrate thanksgiving to commemorate the invasion that so helped them.

Another Caribbean island that has adopted the Thanksgiving traditions from the United States is Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico became a territory of the United States in the late 19th century. The residents there were excited to celebrate with their American neighbors and chose to do so on the same day that we celebrate. Some Puerto Ricans roast a turkey, and some use a traditional recipe of a seasoned turkey stuffed with “mofongo”, which is a mashed plantain dish. It is also common to have an even more traditional fest with roasted pork, plantains, rice, and beans.

Not all the American-style Thanksgiving celebrations are nearby. Liberia has ties to the American Thanksgiving tradition. Liberia is a republic in West Africa and was established by the United States in the early 1820's. The American Colonization Society was a private organization that believed that returning the freed slaves who had been brought to America from Africa would provide them greater opportunity. The American Colonization Society thought that sending the freed slaves back to Africa would help solve the problem of slavery in the United States and would help spread Christianity to Africa. In the early 1880's, the government of Liberia passed an act declaring the first Thursday of November as National Thanksgiving Day. Today it is mostly a Christian holiday with local foods being part of the grand feast. Instead of turkey and pumpkin, they have spicy roast chicken and mashed

cassavas. The churches auction off baskets filled with local fruits such as papayas and mangoes. There is a grand feast after the church services and communities celebrate with live music and dancing.

We have read about the celebrations around the world that have ties to the American traditions of Thanksgiving. However, Americans did not invent this holiday on their own. Those who traveled to the New World on the Mayflower were English settlers. Almost half of those who traveled on the Mayflower had been living and working in the Dutch city of Leiden from 1609 to 1620. Residents of The Netherlands, therefore, claim that the Pilgrims' first Thanksgiving celebration was actually inspired by Leiden's annual commemoration of the breaking of the Spanish siege in 1574. The people in Leiden continue to celebrate their ties to the Pilgrims by holding non-denominational church services on the fourth Thursday of November.

The English weren't the only ones to establish settlements in the New World and the shores of what is now considered the United States of America were not the only landing spots. There is historical record of Spanish and French explorers all throughout the American continents who gave thanks for their safe arrival on dry land and who were offered shared feasts with the natives they encountered. The indigenous peoples that the explorers and conquistadors met had their own traditions to celebrate years of bountiful harvests, arriving safely to destinations, and endings of conflicts.

Most of the traditions of giving thanks revolve around harvest times. The Romans, Greeks, and Egyptians feasted and paid tribute to their gods after the fall harvest. Sukkot is an ancient Jewish harvest festival. If the harvest was not good, people starved. They did not have long-term storage or refrigeration and they were truly grateful when there was a large supply of food. Most cultures came to believe that there was a higher power that controlled the bountiful times and the famine times. When there was bounty, they felt that if they paid tribute to their gods, that they would be blessed with more bounty. So most of the Thanksgiving traditions are religious in nature. They are giving thanks to their understanding of the higher power. That is true of how many of today's traditions began.

“Erntedankfest” in Germany which is held on the first Sunday in October. It is a religious holiday and many attend church and carry a harvest crown of grains, fruit, and flowers to the church in a long parade. They feast on fattened-up chickens. After the parade the fun begins with wheelbarrow races and beer gardens.

Japan also celebrates Thanksgiving. Their celebration is called “Kinro Kansha no Hi” which means Labor Thanksgiving day. This celebration is a mix of an ancient rice harvest festival which was held on November 23 of each year, and a modern celebration of the rights of Japan’s workers. It became a national holiday after World War II. They do not have a giant feast like some other countries do. Instead, the labor organizations run events to celebrate the principles of hard work and community involvement. Children often make thank-you cards for policemen, fire fighters, or other laborers.

The ancient cultures celebrated good harvests and gave thanks to whatever higher powers they honored in their cultures. Today, many still offer gratitude for the good that comes their way. Great teachers often speak of the importance of having a grateful heart. Some encourage us to keep a journal with daily writings of things for which we are grateful. Some teach that it is the power of gratitude that will attract more goodness into our lives. Thanksgiving is a fun holiday and celebration in many cultures around our world. Thanksgiving is also an important practice in every human’s daily life. Not only is giving thanks important for the one who provided, but for our own hearts as well.