

The United Thank Offering Presents:



A November Gratitude Journey for Families



Book Suggestion for Young Children

Giving Thanks: A Native American Good Morning Message

By Chief Jake Swamp with illustrations by Erwin Printup

To listen to a read along version of the book visit: <https://youtu.be/NaaY5onobas>

To purchase a copy of the book visit: <https://bookshop.org/p/books/giving-thanks-a-native-american-good-morning-message-chief-jake-swamp/11648683?ean=9781880000540>

The following Synopsis and background are from the Lee and Low Teachers Guide for this book, which you can access at www.leeandlow.com/books/giving-thanks. It includes further discussion questions and activities to accompany this book. The QR Code will take you to the full guide.



Synopsis: Mohawk parents have traditionally taught their children to start each day by giving thanks to Mother Earth. “To be a human being is an honor, and we offer thanksgiving for all the gifts of life,” begins the Thanksgiving Address. This Native American good morning message is based on the belief that the natural world is a precious and rare gift. The whole universe—from the moon and the stars to the tiniest blade of grass—is addressed as one great family. It is a celebration of the beauty of Mother Earth, which Chief Jake Swamp of the Mohawk Nation, who is also a founder of the Tree of Peace Society, has adapted especially for readers of all ages.

Background: The words in this book are based on the Thanksgiving Address, an ancient message of peace and appreciation of Mother Earth and all her inhabitants, that is still spoken at ceremonial and governmental gatherings held by the Six Nations. These words of thanks come to us from the Native people known as the Haudenosaunee, also known as the Iroquois or Six Nations—Mohawk, Oneida, Cayuga, Onondaga, Seneca, and Tuscarora. The people of the Six Nations are from the areas now known as upstate New York and Canada. According to the most recent Canadian and U.S. census data, there are 74,518 Iroquois in North America.

The three Mohawk clans—Wolf, Turtle, Bear—in turn contain three sub-clans; they hail nine Chiefs in all (Chief Swamp is a Chief of the Wolf Clan) and nine clan mothers. In all the Six Nations, there are 50 Chiefs, each of whom is selected by clan mothers who observe children for leadership skills. The illustrations contain much symbolism. Two examples are: water, which symbolizes continuance because life forms depend on it; and the four winds, which are represented by different animals, i.e., the east by the moose, the west by the cougar, the south by the (gentle) deer, the north by the (strong) bear, and are considered to play a role in how crops grow.

If you would like to see the full text of the original prayer, it is available here:

https://americanindian.si.edu/environment/pdf/01_02_Thanksgiving_Address.pdf

Questions we suggest for discussion (additional ones available on the teacher’s guide listed above):

1. I wonder where you might be in this story?
2. This book gives us a beautiful list of things to give thanks for in the morning. If you were to create a list of things to give thanks for when you wake up each morning or before you go to bed each night, I wonder what might be on your list?
3. This book gives thanks to Mother Earth or Creation. Is there a parts of Creation that is your favorite or that you’re especially thankful for?
4. Do you have a place or time outside where you feel connected to the earth or where you feel especially happy?



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Book Suggestion for Older Children (8-12 years old)

History Smashers: The Mayflower

By Kate Messner, Illustrated by Dylan McConis

To purchase a copy of the book visit: <https://bookshop.org/p/books/history-smashers-the-mayflower-kate-messner/14284015?ean=9780593120316>

A big thank you to one of our UTO Coordinators who is also a librarian at an elementary school in North Dakota for recommending this book!

Synopsis from the Book: “You’ve probably heard about the Mayflower. Chances are, someone told you about the Pilgrims, who came to America because they wanted religious freedom. You probably learned how they crossed the wild Atlantic, how they landed at Plymouth Rock in Massachusetts, how the Wampanoag people taught them to grow corn, and how they all celebrated by sitting down together for a feast – the very first Thanksgiving. But only parts of that story are true. There’s a lot more to the history of the Mayflower, the Pilgrims, and the Wampanoag. So let’s take a look at the historical documents, smash some of those old myths, and uncover the real story.”

Background: This book (which is part of a series) takes on the story of Thanksgiving adding historical facts, information about the Pilgrims (like how they didn’t directly go from England to Plymouth Rock...or land at Plymouth Rock but rather on Cape Cod) and the Wampanoag people. We suggest that parents begin by reading the author’s note at the back of the book that gives some context to why the author took on writing this book for kids and some great resources for further learning. (The resource list includes a book we also strongly recommend for families to read together called *1621: A New Look at Thanksgiving*. While that book is a bit dry, the photos and diagrams make it worth checking it out from your local library.) What we love about *History Smashers: The Mayflower* is that the tone is informative and fun and text is heavily interspersed with comic strips and illustrations.

For parents who might be unfamiliar with the historical facts regarding Thanksgiving and the 1621 harvest feast, we strongly suggest reading this book with your child (or reading it first) so you can talk about it. The book is clear that days of thanksgiving were common for Pilgrims as a way of acknowledging blessings...from rainfall to killing Indigenous people. The book also shares that the Wampanoag also had days centered on gratitude, and a fall harvest celebration was quite common among many cultures. Overall, this is a great book that not only tells kids the truth in ways they can understand, but also talks about why President Lincoln and President Roosevelt made Thanksgiving what it is today.

Questions we suggest for discussion:

1. This book gives a lot of information about the Pilgrims and the Wampanoag. What did you learn that was new or interesting to you? (Be ready to share what was new or interesting to you too!)
2. Towards the end of the book, the author talks about how Thanksgiving as we know it came to be. I wonder what you think might be important to change or include at our Thanksgiving celebration based on what you learned in the book?

Feeling curious? We strongly suggest taking a look at some of the resources and games from the Plymouth Patuxet Museum. We've also included some of the historical recipes they share on their website as a part of the resources below in case you're feeling adventurous and want to try making a recipe from the 1600s!

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Learn About the Three Sisters



The three sisters (corn, beans, and squash) are legendary among Indigenous peoples of the world. There are many stories which explain why these three crops came to be planted together. For example, the three sisters are very important to the Cherokee Nation, and the Tribe works to store, share, and save heirloom seeds as a way of continuing to grow the original plants of their ancestors. A recent UTO grant helped a congregation in Alabama start a traditional Cherokee garden featuring the three sisters and contributing to the tradition of seed saving for the Tribe. Today, we invite you to share the story of the three sisters from the Oneida people (New York). We chose this story because if your child is interested in this activity, the Oneida Indian Nation website offers more “legends and lore” as storytelling is an important component of their culture.

Below is one legend of the Three Sisters shared by the Oneida Indian Nation and taken directly from their website:
<https://www.oneidaindiannation.com/the-legend-of-the-three-sisters/>

Very long ago, there were three sisters who lived in a field. The youngest was so small she could not yet walk; she crawled along the ground, dressed in green. The middle sister wore a bright yellow dress and darted back and forth across the field. The eldest sister stood tall and straight, and her body bent with the wind. She had long yellow hair and wore a green shawl. The three sisters loved one another very much and could not imagine living without the others.

One day a little Indian boy came to the field. He was very handsome and knew the ways of the land. He could talk with the birds and the animals and was straight and fearless. The three sisters were very interested in this boy as they watched him use his stone knife to carve a bowl or hunt with his bow and arrow.

Late in the summer of the boy's first visit to the field, the youngest of the three sisters disappeared. She was the one who could only creep along the ground; she could not even stand unless there was a stick she could cling to. But she was gone, and the other two sisters mourned her until the fall. The Indian boy returned to the field to gather reeds that grew at the edge of a small stream. He used the reeds to make arrow shafts. The two remaining sisters again watched him, fascinated. That night, the second sister disappeared, the one who always wandered hither and yon.

Now there was only one sister left, the tall and straight sister. She did not bow her head in sorrow, though she mourned deeply and thought she could not live in the field alone without her sisters. As the days grew shorter and colder, her green shawl began to lose its color and her yellow hair became dry and tangled. Night and day she sighed for her sisters, but her voice was low like the wind, and no one heard her.

One day in the harvest season, the little Indian boy heard the third sister crying, and he felt sorry for her. He took her in his arms and carried her to his home, and there a delightful surprise awaited her: Her sisters were there in the lodge, safe and very glad to be reunited. They explained that they had been curious about the little Indian boy and had followed him home, and they had decided to stay because winter was coming and his home was warm and comfortable.

The sisters also were making themselves useful to the boy and his family. The youngest, now all grown up, kept the dinner pot full, while the second sister, still in her yellow dress, dried herself on the shelf so she could fill the dinner pot later in the winter. The eldest sister was so pleased to be with her sisters again and so impressed with the help they gave the boy that she too began drying herself so the family would have meal to use as the winter went on.

And from that day to this, the three sisters were never separated again.

For more stories: <https://www.oneidaindiannation.com/legendsandlore/>



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A November Gratitude Journey for Families



Three Sisters Craft/Activity



Supplies needed:

- Markers or crayons
- Paper
- Dried corn, beans, and pumpkin seeds (if you want to omit these, you can just draw the plants)

Directions:

To expand our discussion on the three sisters, we're going to make an art project to represent how corn, beans, and squash grow together so they can support one another.

Using crayons or markers, draw a field where you can plant the three sisters. Draw tall, straight lines for sister corn, climbing vines around the corn for sister bean, and winding vines on the ground for sister squash.

Next, use seeds to make corn on the stalks, beans on the vines, and pumpkin seeds to represent pumpkins growing on the ground. Add other elements to the picture as you see fit while you talk about the story. We call planting things together like the three sisters "companion planting," as the combination of plants forms a mutually beneficial relationship to deter weeds and insects, enrich the soil, and help the plants grow stronger together.



See the Three Sisters in Action!

In 2022, the United Thank Offering gave a grant to the Diocese of Alabama to support Good Shepherd Episcopal Church and Father Bude in creating a Cherokee Three Sisters Garden and educational gathering place. During the summer of 2023, the first set of plants were placed in the ground using heirloom seeds from the Cherokee Nation and planted in circles using historical planting methods. To learn more about this three sisters garden visit: <https://www.gsdecatour.org> or better yet, go visit the folks at Good Shepherd and learn all about it for yourselves!

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A November Gratitude Journey for Families



Additional Resources for discussing Thanksgiving

There are wonderful resources online to help children learn about the history and traditions around Thanksgiving and we commend them to you, particularly those that come from Indigenous communities.

Here is a list of books we've used with elementary-aged children that we recommend (in addition to the two listed above):

- ***We are Grateful: Otsaliheliga* by Traci Sorell**
<https://bookshop.org/p/books/we-are-grateful-otsaliheliga-traci-sorell/15867833?ean=9781623542993>
- ***1621: A New Look at Thanksgiving* by Catherine O'Neill Grace** <https://bookshop.org/p/books/1621-a-new-look-at-thanksgiving-catherine-grace/16779767?ean=9780792261391>
- ***We are still here! Native American Truths Everyone Should Know* by Traci Sorell**
<https://bookshop.org/p/books/we-are-still-here-native-american-truths-everyone-should-know-traci-sorell/15014386?ean=9781623541927>

Here's a list of online resources:

- For lesson plans and other book recommendations from the National Education Association please visit: <https://www.nea.org/advocating-for-change/new-from-nea/native-educators-say-thanksgivinglessons-can-be-accurate>
- Oklahoma City Schools, Native American Student Services created this resource: https://neadjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/NASS-Thanksgiving-Booklet-Print-Ready.pdf?_ga=2.40110178.1305114002.1626379770-363981057.1626379770
- Harvest Ceremony: Beyond the Thanksgiving Myth, from the National Museum of the American Indian offers an overview and discussion questions that might be helpful: https://neadjustice.org/wpcontent/uploads/2017/11/NMAI_Harvest_Study_Guide.pdf?_ga=2.220267608.1305114002.1626379770-363981057.1626379770
- Scholastic also offers resources by grade level: https://www.scholastic.com/scholastic_thanksgiving/index.html and an interview with Russell M. Peters (1929-2002), a Mashpee Wampanoag leader, Native American rights advocate. <https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/articles/teaching-content/native-american-perspective-fastturtle-wampanoag-tribe-member/>
- The Plymouth Patuxet Museum offers a ton of amazing resources including a fun online game called: "You are the Historian" they even offer help and information for kids working on reports for school. You can find it all here: <https://plimoth.org/for-students>

The United Thank Offering Presents:



A November Gratitude Journey for Families



Try some recipes that may have been at the 1619 Harvest Feast



The Plimoth Patuxet Museum (and their website) is a wonderful resource of information about the Pilgrims and the Wampanoag people. Our Thanksgiving meal looks very different than what they would have shared in 1621 in many ways. Below, you'll find two recipes from the Plimoth Patuxet Museum that are very similar. One is a version that the Pilgrims used, and one is a version that the Wampanoag used. They're easy to make and we hope you'll give one (or both) a try!

The recipes below are taken directly from the Plimoth Patuxet Museum and are found at the following link, along with a few others if you want to try some more! <https://plimoth.org/for-students/activities-games/historic-cooking>

Nasaump

Nasaump is a traditional Wampanoag dish that is made from dried corn, local berries, and nuts. It is boiled in water until it thickens and is similar to porridge or oatmeal.

- 1 ½ cups cornmeal
- 1 cup strawberries, raspberries, blueberries or a combination of all three
- ½ cup crushed walnuts, hazelnuts, sunflower seeds or a combination of all three
- 1 quart water
- maple syrup or sugar to taste (optional)

Combine cornmeal, berries, crushed nuts, and the optional sweetener in a pot of water and bring to a boil. Turn down the heat to medium and cook, stirring frequently, for 15 minutes.

Samp

This recipe is the English version of Nasaump. The word samp is a simplified English version of the word nasaump. This description comes from the 1600s book "Two Voyages to New England" by John Josselyn:
It is light of digestion, and the English make a kind of Loblolly of it to eat with Milk, which they call Sampe; they beat it in a Morter, and sift the flower out of it; the remainder they call Hominey, which they put into a Pot of two or three Gallons, with Water, and boyl it upon a gentle Fire till it be like a Hasty Pudon; they put of this into Milk, and so eat it.

Modern Version

- 2 cups coarse corn grits
- 4 cups water
- 1 cup milk
- ¼ cup sugar

Bring water to a boil in large saucepan with a heavy bottom. Add the corn grits and stir. Simmer until they are soft, about 10 minutes, and the water has been absorbed. Serve with milk and sugar.