

PROJECT TITLE: Abraham Lincoln and Thanksgiving	
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Classroom Practice

Teaching Thesis:

This instructional kit is designed for use in a third grade classroom and is based off of Virginia Standards of Learning that require students to identify the contributions of Abraham Lincoln (3.11 b). Thanksgiving is typically given a lot of attention in elementary level classrooms; but, this attention is focused on the symbols we attach with Thanksgiving (turkeys, corn, pilgrims) and talk of how students plan to spend Thanksgiving (eating, watching football, watching the Macy’s Parade). Little to no attention is given to the history of Thanksgiving, other than brief lessons on the Pilgrims. Students learn that Thanksgiving originated with the pilgrims in Plymouth Rock, but teachers rarely delve deeper into the history of the traditional American holiday. Thanksgiving has drastically changed from the bountiful feast of the Pilgrims and Indians to a religious holiday associated with the Civil War, to a holiday marked by food, football, and a huge parade. It is important for students to understand why and how such an important and prominent holiday has evolved and developed.

Suggested Grade Level and Length of Activities:

These lesson plans are designed around a Virginia 3rd Grade History standard. However, these lessons can be adaptable for 2nd through 5th grades and could even be adapted for middle school or United States History classes. Each lesson is estimated to require about 50 minutes of instructional time.

Significance & Relevance:

This instructional kit is relevant for students of any age (must be adapted for grades other than 3rd grade) and should be used to learn Abraham Lincoln’s contributions to an important American holiday.

Selected State Standards:

Virginia History and Social Science SOL

3.11b) Identify the contributions of George Washington; Thomas Jefferson; Abraham Lincoln; Rosa Parks; Thurgood Marshall; Martin Luther King, Jr; and Cesar Chavez.

OAH Historical Inquiry Skills

Historical Research Capabilities: Students will study primary sources such as Lincoln's Proclamation of Thanksgiving; other Presidential Thanksgiving Proclamations; and Letter from Sarah Hale to Abraham Lincoln. Students will be able to pose questions influenced by said sources as well as discover answers to questions posed by teacher.

Historical Issues-Analysis and Decision Making: Students will identify reasons behind Lincoln's decision to proclaim a national day of Thanksgiving.

Historical Comprehension: Using primary sources, timelines, pictures, and discussions, students will understand and explain Lincoln and Hale's roles in creating a national Thanksgiving holiday.

Chronological Thinking: Students will use a timeline to mark the dates of different proclamations of Thanksgiving to develop a sense of time.

Lesson Objectives:

- Students will be able to analyze five primary sources: letter from Sarah Hale to Abraham Lincoln; George Washington's Thanksgiving Proclamation; James Madison's Thanksgiving Proclamation; New York state's Thanksgiving Proclamation; Abraham Lincoln's Proclamation of Thanksgiving to discover why Lincoln created a national Thanksgiving holiday and how Sarah Hale helped him to do this.
- Students will be able to collect information such as who the author is, the intended audience, and what day the author set for Thanksgiving, gathered from analyzing and discussion and use it to fill in an I-chart and History Matrix
- Students will be able to explain the steps taken in creating a national Thanksgiving holiday

Lesson Plans or Instructional Activities—this kit contains two 50 minute lessons.

Lesson 1 (Day 1): In this lesson, students will analyze primary sources to discover the history of Thanksgiving. Students will use I-charts and discussions to explore new information. By the end of the lesson, students should be able to answer the questions: "What roles did Sarah Hale and Abraham Lincoln play in creating a national Thanksgiving holiday?" "What steps were taken to create the holiday?" and "Why did Sarah Hale persist in her quest?" At the end of this lesson, students will be assessed by use of an exit slip. The teacher will wrap up the lesson with an open ended question, which students will answer on their exit slips.

Lesson 2 (Day 2): In this lesson, students will discover how Lincoln is connected with Thanksgiving. Students will use Lincoln's Proclamation of Thanksgiving to explain how he helped to make Thanksgiving a national holiday. Students will be able to answer questions such as "Did Lincoln agree with Hale about the idea of a national Thanksgiving holiday?" "How did Lincoln turn Thanksgiving into a national holiday for all Americans to celebrate?" and "How did the Civil War influence Lincoln's decision to create a national Thanksgiving holiday?" Students will be given a History Frame to complete which will be used as the assessment.

Technology:

SMARTboards (or overhead projectors) can be used to project images of primary sources or pictures. SMARTboard or Elmo, can also be used by teacher to model how to fill in the I-chart and History Frame.

Modifications, Differentiation, and Extensions:

- Place students into groups to allow students of varying capabilities to work together.
- Write on board terms such as “proclamation” to accompany an explanation
- Challenge higher level learners to research more into why the Gettysburg Address was an influence to Lincoln in writing his Proclamation of Thanksgiving
- Students can also be challenged to discover ways in which America’s Thanksgiving has influenced similar holidays in other countries around the world.
- Students can read the book Thank You, Sarah by Laurie Anderson for more information on Sarah Hale; or teacher can use this book as a read aloud.

Related Materials and Resources—

- I-chart
- History Frame
- Primary Sources:
 1. Letter from Sarah Hale to Abraham Lincoln
 2. Lincoln’s Proclamation of Thanksgiving
 3. George Washington’s Thanksgiving Proclamation
 4. James Madison’s Thanksgiving Proclamation
 5. State of New York’s Thanksgiving Proclamation

Annotated Instructional Bibliography—

Abraham Lincoln Online. Retrieved February 13, 2010 from <http://www.abrahamlincolnonline.org>

Summary: This website is all about Lincoln! The site includes books about Lincoln, some of Lincoln’s famous speeches, links to places significant to Lincoln (i.e. his log cabin birth home), information on how to invite “Mr. Lincoln” to your classroom, important Library of Congress documents concerning Lincoln, Lincoln’s biography, images/photo tours, Lincoln related websites for students, and lesson plans. Very valuable tool for teachers.

Anderson, Laurie. Thank You Sarah.

Summary: This is a great children's book about a woman with a pen and persistence. Sarah Hale spent 34 years attempting to make Thanksgiving a national holiday. This is the story of how finally she got Lincoln's attention on the matter and helped to create a national holiday.

National Archives. Retrieved February 13, 2011 from <http://www.archive.gov/presss/press-releases/2009/nr09-25.html>

Summary: This website by the National Archives has information on the history of Thanksgiving along with several useful primary sources. These sources include Lincoln's Proclamation of Thanksgiving, President Truman receiving the White Houses' Thanksgiving Turkey, and George Washington's Thanksgiving Proclamation. Although some of the primary sources are not directly related to Lincoln, they are an excellent way to show Thanksgiving progressing through the centuries.

National Parks Service. Retrieved February 13, 2011 from http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/source/sb2/sb2w.htm

Summary: This is the text of Lincoln's Proclamation of Thanksgiving. Teachers should read through this to have a deep understanding of what Lincoln was asking for from him fellow Americans. For older students, teachers can break this down into sections for students to dissect.

Pilgrim Hall Museum. Retrieved February 13, 2011 from <http://www.pilgrimhall.org/thot-cw.htm>

Summary: This website contains information and pictures about Thanksgiving during the Civil War. Can be used to visually show differences between Thanksgiving in 1864 and Thanksgiving in 21st century.

Pocantico Hills Lincoln Website. Retrieved February 13, 2011 from <http://www.pocanticohills.org/lincoln/lincoln.htm>

Summary: This website has many useful tools such as quizzes, a Lincoln timeline, activities for young students, books about Lincoln, a Lincoln reader's theater, informative National Geographic videos, and several sites for teachers with more Lincoln information.

Social Studies For Kids. Retrieved February 13, 2011 from <http://www.socialstudiesforkids.com/subjects/abrahamlincoln.htm>

Summary: This site contains lots of information about Lincoln for kids. It has fun facts, a timeline, several Lincoln-related documents, and a link to explore what the White House would have been like during Lincoln's presidency.