



## **Our Stories, Values and Traditions: Tall Tales and the Thanksgiving Story**

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Chantilly Montessori

This curriculum unit is recommended for: Grades 2 and 3

**Keywords:** History, Nationalism, Traditions, Values, Tall Tales, Thanksgiving, Primary Sources

**Teaching Standards:** See [Appendix 1](#) for teaching standards addressed in this unit.

**Synopsis:** In this unit students will explore tall tales and the Thanksgiving Story from a historical perspective in order to gain an understanding of the relationship between stories we tell about our past, the values they represent and how these connect with traditions to form part of our national identity. Students will practice critical thinking throughout the unit as they consider source validity and perspective, compare both fiction and nonfiction readings to primary sources, develop an understanding of how historical events impact national identity and consider the values implied by modern stories and traditions. These abstract ideas are accessed through children's literature, providing additional opportunities to integrate reading comprehension activities.

*I plan to teach this unit during the coming year to 23 students in first, second and third grade.*

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## **Our Stories, Values and Traditions: Tall Tales and the Thanksgiving Story**

*Heather Simpson*

### **Rationale/Objectives**

In the elementary classroom, children are developing important skills that will prepare them to be critical thinkers and seekers of knowledge in later years of study. At the most basic level, this includes learning to read and write. Beyond that, early elementary children are learning to engage with new knowledge, ask questions and assemble ideas with the information they gather. They are in the process of constructing their 'selves' in every sense, from how they define themselves as learners to how they view themselves as a part of ever widening circles of communities. This unit seeks to provide guidance in the development of both of these forms of identity as children become historical thinkers, and investigate the traditions that reflect values associated with membership within a nation.

Children will learn that the stories we tell about our nation reflect events, perceptions, values and our desire to feel a sense of normalcy within a shared community. This 'big idea' is based in theories of nationalism and the invention of tradition, which seek to explain how and why we form national identities in the modern world.

Specifically, this unit will use studies of tall tales and Thanksgiving, both of which can be viewed as invented traditions that served the purpose of uniting people throughout history. I have chosen to begin with the tall tale as it provides a number of opportunities to build background knowledge and skills. First, tall tales contain both fictional and factual elements. Many are based on real people or events, with the fictitious parts often being so exaggerated that the children should immediately be able to disentangle them from what could be facts. Second, we will be able to compare the disentangled possible facts with historical sources, giving children experience with establishing proof rather than taking all ideas presented at face value. Finally, since tall tales are a form of fiction, children should be able to consider the author's perspective and purpose as it relates to implied values. Students already have some exposure to identifying what lessons fables and other tales are implying, and through studies of tall tales I hope to link this understanding more firmly to author's purpose.

Following our studies of tall tales we will apply the skills of disentangling fact from fiction and investigating the values portrayed by the stories we tell through an in-depth study of the history of the Thanksgiving story and traditions. Through our study we will recognize that Thanksgiving is an 'invented tradition' that has reflected and created national identity and values since the mid 1800's.

This unit is designed to take place over a two month period. By the end of this unit students should understand that history is shaped by perspectives, that those perspectives demonstrate values and that the traditions we share today reflect history. They should also develop skills of inquiry and reading comprehension.

### **School Background Information and Demographic**

Chantilly Montessori is a public magnet program in Charlotte, North Carolina. Following the Montessori philosophy, we educate children in multi-age classrooms consisting of pre-K/Kindergarten (primary), grades 1-3 (lower elementary) and grades 4-6 (upper elementary), with children learning under the guidance of the same teacher for the duration of each level.

At the lower elementary level, for which this unit is written, children engage in much of their learning through cultural studies, which encompasses social-studies and science. The method recognizes children’s intrinsic motivation to learn more about the world, and is presented with stories and hands-on materials. Children select their own works, with guidance and lessons from the teacher, throughout a three hour work cycle each morning. Themes that are being studied by the whole class are typically presented in the afternoon with whole group lessons and follow up activities that employ differentiation and/or heterogeneous groupings.

Each year a classroom has approximately 2/3 of the students returning from the previous year. Many whole-class studies are designed to rotate on a three year cycle so that children engage with different variations on themes or entirely new topics each year. This curriculum unit is designed as a rotating theme, so that in other years the class might explore additional Thanksgiving concepts. Teachers in traditional environments may find it beneficial to hold vertical discussions between teams so that children are exposed to new concepts related to Thanksgiving each year.

Our school has 325 students, with approximately 20% receiving free or reduced lunch.

White	68%
African American	20%
Hispanic	9%
Asian	1%
Multi Racial	2%

### **Content Background**

#### *Nationalism*

“What Makes a Nation?” is a central question in the study of nationalism. The vagueness of this question is likely purposeful as the direction one takes to answer it can lead one to

investigate history, economics, psychology, ethnicity, culture and beyond. A bit of historical information may ground us before we continue. Nations, as we understand them today, are considered to be the result of various historical collisions, beginning in the late 1700s. The dynasties that had existed before fell and were taken over by popular governments. These allowed ordinary people to gain greater control over politics, and therefore their own lives. Technological innovations led to mass communication, which was further influenced by capitalism. Theorists debate the timing and the importance of each contributing variable, but the end result is a world that is divided into what are considered 'nation-states'. Benedict Anderson argues that these nations are 'imagined communities' which are further defined by being limited and sovereign. We are imagined communities in that we feel a connection to all others within our nation even though it is impossible that we would ever actually know everyone. We are limited in the sense that a nation can never consist of the entire world, but rather is bounded by lines on a map that define who is in and who is out. We are sovereign in that we rule over ourselves, in contrast to the dynastic period before the rise of the nation-state.

Anderson argues that a major influence on the creation of the nation was the spread of print following the invention of the printing press and the power of capitalism. As the market for books in Latin, the language of the elite, became saturated, publishers began printing in select vernaculars, thus influencing the creation of a common language in an area. As literacy rates grew and books became more available, ideas spread quickly, linking people through the new learnings they experienced in the books and providing the opportunity for them to imagine others experiencing lives similar to their own. Novels and newspapers made it possible for people to imagine themselves in relation to a larger community, one with which they could find common goals and, eventually, traditions and values. Other theorists argue about the timing, noting that nation creation led to mass education, followed by literacy and then shared belief systems within the nation. This debate only concerns us with regard to what the theorists agree on, namely that exposure to mass communication is a component of being a nation in that it unites citizens through the spread of common ideas. In this unit, Anderson's theory is extended beyond book publishing to mass media, which influenced the spread of tall tales and the Thanksgiving story.

Today the nation-state is the norm in the world, preserved and perpetuated by systematic instillation of ideology through mass media, mandatory education and civic regulations. Nationalism then, is the resulting feeling of group identity that is linked to a limited, sovereign, imagined community.

### *Invented Tradition*

As nations have developed over the last 300 years, each has seen significant transformation resulting from, among other things, technological innovation, migration, and shifting geographic boundaries. In times of change, people seek out opportunities to

reaffirm and clarify their identities. In their book, *The Invention of Tradition*, Hobsbawm and Ranger argue that people accomplish these goals through the invention of traditions, which instill values, establish cohesion in communities, legitimize institutions and imply continuity with the past. Such aims can be met with traditions established through popular or civic actions, and often the two intersect in forming our most enduring, nation building traditions.

Invented traditions concern us within this unit as they provide a window into the past. Viewing the history of traditions provides "...indicators of problems which might not otherwise be recognized, and developments which are otherwise difficult to identify and to date. They are evidence."<sup>1</sup> More specifically, they are evidence of not just past events, but past experiences of ordinary people and their relationship to the larger, invented community. Teaching history to first through third graders will have some challenges as these children are at a developmental stage in which their world is small and just beginning to move beyond their immediate experiences. My hope is that studies of invented tradition, and thus the experiences, feelings and values of ordinary people, will be more accessible to this age level than history courses focusing on political events.

In *Mirror of Modernity*, Stephen Vlastos explores the traditions that indicate responses to social developments in Japan. He notes that "Constitutive of modern cultural formation, they also mirror modern society's anxieties, fissures and ruptures."<sup>2</sup> This concept will be applied to our investigation of Tall Tales which were popular during a time of rapid geographic expansion and technological change. In the end, the tall tale's popularity did not survive the rupture of the civil war, except as a relic of the past. It is interesting to note that these tales were rewritten, not for popular culture, but rather as children's books at the same time as the Thanksgiving Story gained a foothold in elementary classrooms in the early 1900's.

Hobsbawm notes that America has many invented traditions through which we can study our history, in part because of our frequent reinvention as we assimilated new groups of people into our nation through immigration. He specifically cites our politically-encouraged national rituals of the 4<sup>th</sup> of July and Thanksgiving, as well as an education designed for political socialization, as top-down methods by which America established traditions to foster nationalism. Thanksgiving traditions, and the accompanying story, are a particularly interesting case study because they reflect both popular and civic tradition inventions, and it is the interplay of these that allows for the holiday's continued success.

### *Tall Tales*

As noted earlier, tall tales provide an interesting lens through which we can investigate history and study invented traditions, since they became popular in a time of great change as a method for surviving in a tumultuous world. We choose to begin learning tools of

historical inquiry and opening the door to studying tradition's implied values with tall tales because they are accessible to children and provide a safe space for questioning fact vs. fiction. We are also beginning with tall tales as they provide background knowledge in American history and geography.

The Tall Tale is described as “comic fiction disguised as fact, deliberately exaggerated to the brinks of credibility or beyond in order to reveal emotional truths, to awaken his audience, to exorcise fears and to define and bind a social group.”<sup>3</sup> Brown also notes that American Tall Tales' use of exaggeration helped mitigate fears related to the physical environment in a quickly expanding nation.

The historical setting for the creation of tall tales is primarily the 1830s through 1860, a time when America was expanding and burgeoning mass media was a source to connect people across ever-growing distances. At this time newspapers, almanacs and gift books all began printing tall tales, spreading their popularity across the land. As such, they served as print sources that linked a growing imagined community.

In addition to the above definition, several other characteristics of Tall Tales should be noted. First, a Tall Tale is a fictional story told in the form of a personal narrative. The hero of the story is presented as familiar to the author, which implies greater knowledge of the 'truth' being presented. Authenticity and credibility are established through detailed descriptions in the beginning, followed by a series of increasingly absurd events. Exaggeration is extended through comic comparisons, anthropomorphizing and presentation of the illogical, improbable and impossible. Through these exaggerations, the tales make light of fears and celebrate the strength of the hero character over them. The presumption is that the listeners would share common fears and therefore engage with the tall tale, solidifying their group identity by making light of the challenges they face in day to day life. It is important to note that the heroes in Tall Tales are farmers, hunters, explorers and otherwise everyday people. Some of them are based on actual figures in history, while others are likely wholly invented. In addition to providing proof that the challenges of the day could be overcome, each character's personality imparts values, ranging from generosity to tenacity, that were shared by the listener. For further information regarding the relationships between tall tales, history, values and teaching children, I encourage teachers to read the introduction of *American Tall Tales* by Mary Pope Osborne.<sup>4</sup> She reflects on her choice as an author to alter or maintain aspects of each tale in light of her own views about teaching history and the values presented in the original tall tales some of which would seem unethical to modern ears.

### *Thanksgiving*

Our second investigation of invented traditions will take us to Thanksgiving, an American Holiday full of 'tradition' that is based on a founding myth. The story connects us to our beginnings, reminding us that we all<sup>5</sup> have immigrant ancestors who

took on the struggles of moving to a new land and playing a part in the creation of our nation. Thus, the story unites a heterogeneous nation and solidifies our national identity as one people who come from many lands but identify with each other through shared beliefs.

In *We are What We Celebrate*, Amitai Etzioni notes that holidays fulfill a social function of integrating people through reinforcing shared beliefs and affirming commitments to group values. Thanksgiving today serves this purpose through our actions of joining with family and giving thanks together for our shared prosperity. Etzioni also notes that “Modifications of a holiday both reflect changes in values and power relations, and help to formulate and ensconce changes in values and power.”<sup>6</sup> This proves to be particularly true as we study the actual history of Thanksgiving, a holiday that includes a national proclamation each year, and was in fact made national during our country’s greatest time of discord, the Civil War. Furthermore, Thanksgiving was used as a purposeful tool to assimilate immigrants into American culture and values.

Both the telling of the Thanksgiving story as a founding myth and the rituals we engage in today are invented tradition. Days of Thanksgiving occurred throughout colonial years in America with specific evidence of their occurrences in 1541 (present day Texas), 1607 (Jacksonville Florida) and 1610 (Jamestown, Virginia). The feast on which our Thanksgiving myth is based took place in 1621 in Plymouth, Massachusetts. We have one piece of primary evidence that refers explicitly to that day in a letter written by Edward Winslow. From the Winslow letter we learn that the feast took place over three days, included 90 Wampanoag men, and both fowl and deer were enjoyed. Additional details that make up our Thanksgiving story are either based on other knowledge of the Pilgrim’s lives, or entirely invented.

For the next two hundred years, days of Thanksgiving were proclaimed at varying dates and locations. Initially, like the first Thanksgiving, they were religious rejoicings at the aversion of a disaster. Even the Thanksgiving proclamations of our first presidents, when they occurred, were in relation to specific celebrations, such as the end of the War of 1812. This was in fact the last presidential Thanksgiving proclamation for 51 years. During this period Thanksgiving was proclaimed by governors in some New England states. As industrialization and westward expansion stretched families across cities, states and territories, these transplants brought their Thanksgiving practices with them. With the growth of transportation possibilities, Thanksgiving became a holiday of homecoming, when far-flung families reunited. With these changes Thanksgiving took on new meanings, representing memories of earlier, simpler, more virtuous times. The holiday, once religious, became a “sentimental domestic occasion”.<sup>7</sup> Its continued spread as such was spearheaded by a Thanksgiving enthusiast, Sarah Hale.

Hale was the editor of the most popular periodical during the 1840’s and 1850’s, the *Godey’s Lady’s Book*. The magazine promoted fashion, household advice and

educational articles for woman and was extremely influential as a perceived representation of middle class America. Hale, a New Englander, felt strongly that Thanksgiving should be celebrated throughout the land. Her methods for achieving this are noteworthy in light of invented tradition theory as she appealed to both the masses and civic leaders simultaneously! Each year she used her magazine to demonstrate the virtues of Thanksgiving celebrations with recipes, advice columns and fictional stories that imparted her version of Thanksgiving values. As she worked to win the heart of the nation, she also wrote letters to every sitting governor and president, imploring them to make Thanksgiving proclamations. Her efforts were successful with governors, but not the commanders -in -chief, who likely had larger issues to consider as they worked to lead an ever expanding nation. Having no less on his plate, but perhaps recognizing the role that a national Thanksgiving could play in reuniting a nation torn by civil war, President Lincoln finally proclaimed the first National Thanksgiving in 51 years in 1863. For additional information on this actual act, Sarah's letter to Lincoln and his subsequent proclamation can be found here [https://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/primarysourcesets/thanksgiving/pdf/sarah\\_hale.pdf](https://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/primarysourcesets/thanksgiving/pdf/sarah_hale.pdf)<sup>8</sup> It is interesting to observe that in all of Hale's writings, she never mentioned Thanksgiving as a recreation of a 1621 harvest festival. Instead, she focused her attention on the benefits of a shared national, domestic holiday. Such a holiday, she believed, would unite an expanding nation and reinforce values related to family, religion and gratitude.

From 1890-1930 the nation was presented with a new challenge as large numbers of Europeans migrated to the country. It was in response to this that the story of Thanksgiving as a feast between Pilgrim immigrants and welcoming 'Indians' came into fashion. A nation with a changing face needed a new story that embodied evolving values and offered them in the form of traditions that could be shared by all. As such, civic tradition engineering came out in full force. Immigrant children were encouraged to attend schools, where they would learn American culture. Part of this assimilation process was an annual Thanksgiving pageant, through which the newly American children learned 'traditional' American rituals. Textbooks were printed with stories of the 'First Thanksgiving' which imparted values such as generosity, simplicity and piety. Immigrant families, searching for their identity as Americans, accepted the traditions and even made them their own with the addition of ethnic foods to the meal.<sup>9</sup>

More recent history brought further changes to the telling of the Thanksgiving story. New attention was given to both the 'true' story of Thanksgiving and the changing face of America. Today, children's literature about Thanksgiving ranges from the traditional pilgrim story, to more accurate portrayals of Native Americans, to modern immigrant stories that revere the day.

Sarah Hale summed up the strength of this holiday as an invented tradition when she predicted:

“Everything that contributes to bind us in one vast empire together, to quicken the sympathy that makes us feel from the icy North to the sunny South that we are one family, each a member of a great and free Nation, not merely the unit of a remote locality, is worthy of being cherished. We have sought to reawaken and increase this sympathy, believing that the fine filaments of the affections are stronger than laws to keep the Union of our States sacred in the hearts of our people... We believe our Thanksgiving Day, if fixed and perpetuated, will be a great and sanctifying promoter of this national spirit.”<sup>10</sup>

### **Strategies for Teaching**

In this unit of study we will use a number of techniques and strategies to facilitate and organize learning, develop skills for critical thinking and build reading comprehension.

#### *Historical Inquiry*

In *What is History Teaching* by Chris Husbands, we learn that “The development of historical understanding is always the result of an active dialogue between ourselves, in the present, and the evidence in whatever form which the past has left behind.”<sup>11</sup> This unit attempts to help children engage in dialogue with the past as they compare information from a variety of sources, asking questions and basing conclusions on evidence. The unit also uses sources in an interesting way, since a source about the first Thanksgiving from the early 1900’s might actually provide more information about the early 1900’s than the 1621 Thanksgiving. Additionally, working with young children makes using primary sources difficult as they are unable to read much of what was written in the past. Therefore, our unit will rely on primary sources in the form of images and short pieces of writing linked to age appropriate fiction and nonfiction.

Historical Inquiry asks us to investigate themes and questions, rather than memorizing trivia and chronology as we present history to children. The investigations should guide children’s curiosity so that they are learning “the process of asking meaningful questions, finding information, drawing conclusions and reflecting on possible solutions.”<sup>12</sup> Our lessons are based in the question ‘What values are implied by the story/tradition, and how do they stay the same or change over time?’ Lessons will consist of whole-class read-alouds and discussions, complemented by small group work when books can be found that match children’s reading levels. As we engage with sources through historical inquiry, we will follow Vansledright’s suggestions to:

1. Identify the type of source.
2. Recognize the purpose for creating the source.
3. Identify the perspective of the source’s creator.
4. Compare the source to other accounts to judge reliability.<sup>13</sup>

### *Other Strategies*

To organize our thoughts as we gather and analyze information over the two-month long unit, the class will use a number of charts as both working tools and records of our findings. We will also construct a timeline of American History on our classroom wall to assist children in developing a mental chronology of history and note the changes that occur over time. This timeline will be complemented with a map of the United States on which we will note the location of events and stories that we read. Finally, the unit will be rich with narrative stories that will pique the interest of our young learners, provide a launch pad for questioning and recognize the role that an author has in telling a story to impart specific values.

### **Timeline**

We will begin our unit with a study of tall tales compared to other sources on United States history to distinguish possible fact from fiction. Our initial tall tale characters will be actual historical figures, and we will compare the tall tales to nonfiction accounts, considering why the storyteller of the former chose to exaggerate rather than simply share the truth. Children will recognize that exaggerations build character traits, which represent values or establish identity with a group. Furthermore, they will learn that authors purposefully choose the accuracy and type of information they share. We will then read tall tales based on fictional characters and consider the authors' intended and implied values as well as their relationship to events in American history. Finally, children will read modern tall tales and consider whether the values they represent are related to our experiences.

Having developed some capacity for historical inquiry and an understanding that stories can reflect a society's values, we will begin a study of the Thanksgiving Story. The first week will be dedicated to teasing out fact from fiction in the traditional Pilgrim and Indian story using children's trade books. We will then look at the one existing primary source and consider how and why other authors created so many additional details. This week will also cover the creation of Thanksgiving as a national holiday as we read about Sarah Hale, linking us back to tall tales, as Sarah's campaign took place during the popularity of their publishing. We will consider the events on our timeline and how they might have influenced the acceptance of a new national holiday and its traditions and values. We will also briefly note the role of mass media and government in spreading the holiday. In our third week we will refer back to the first week's investigation of the Pilgrim and Indian story and explore its purposeful creation during a time of immigration in our nation through analysis of primary source images, nonfiction and picture books. Finally, we will read modern Thanksgiving stories, considering the continuation of traditions and inclusion of new values, and reflecting on their relevance in our own lives. To end the unit and assess student understanding children will compose a

written response to a modern Thanksgiving picture book and work together to establish a tradition that we will carry out during our classroom Thanksgiving celebration.

The activities below are organized into a session on tall tales and a session on Thanksgiving. Each session is subdivided into 3-4 weeks of lessons, and each week's lessons are combined into a narrative plan with the intention that individual teachers will spread the activities over the course of the week as their schedule allows.

Suggested activities that span the sessions:

1. A wall chart timeline from the year 1600-at least 1920. As the class moves through the activities they can place images from primary sources, tall tale figures and maps of the changing United States on the timeline. This then serves as a reference throughout the unit.
2. A large map of the United States that also serves as a reference for children to understand the location of tall tale figures and important changes in history.
3. A variety of class charts to organize ideas. (Appendix 2)

### **Session 1: Tall Tales**

Week 1: Introduction to tall tales through a study of Johnny Appleseed

*Goals:* Introduce tall tales. Place a tall tale figure within historical context. Compare sources.

*Activities:*

Introduce the unit of study by explaining that a tall tale is a story based in truth, but including exaggeration and impossibilities that make it fiction. Explain that tall tales were a popular form of entertainment in the 1800s, first through oral retellings and then through publishing in newspapers and magazines. By reading tall tales and comparing them to other historical sources we can learn more about what life was like for the people who wrote and read them.

Introduce Johnny Appleseed as a story based on a real man named Johnny Chapman who lived in the early 1800s. He was well known to people at this time because he traveled large areas, meeting many people who then told others about him. As they passed these stories from person to person, the truth was stretched, leading to the incorporation of exaggeration and impossibilities in the stories we now have today. Explain that this week we will compare stories and consider the period in history to determine the 'most likely true' story of the man known as Johnny Appleseed.

Read one version of Johnny Appleseed, stopping throughout to fill in a large version of the Johnny Appleseed Comparison Chart. (Appendix 2) Divide students into groups and provide each with a different version of the story and a copy of the chart for group work.

Gather as a class to compare the information students have gathered on their charts. Model critical thinking as you consider sources verifying each other, the type of story and possible author's purpose and reliability of the source. This discussion can be initiated by reading the first several pages of Jane Yolan's version of Johnny Appleseed<sup>14</sup> which is organized on each page to compare fact, fiction and historical sources. Note your findings on the class chart.

Next, present images to build background knowledge about the time period. Begin by comparing maps that demonstrate the country's acquisition of land during the 1800s: [http://xroads.virginia.edu/~map/terr\\_hp.html](http://xroads.virginia.edu/~map/terr_hp.html)<sup>15</sup>. Ask the children to make observations and as they do, help them understand new vocabulary such as 'territory' and 'wilderness' with additional sources:

<http://www.loc.gov/resource/cph.3b50461/><sup>16</sup>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wilderness\\_Road#/media/File:George\\_Caleb\\_Bingham\\_-\\_Daniel\\_Boone\\_escorting\\_settlers\\_through\\_the\\_Cumberland\\_Gap.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wilderness_Road#/media/File:George_Caleb_Bingham_-_Daniel_Boone_escorting_settlers_through_the_Cumberland_Gap.jpg)<sup>17</sup>

Use this discussion to launch the Big Question of this session, "Why did people tell tall tales?" Guide children to refer back to the images and stories to understand the role the stories played in conveying values of kindness, generosity and safety during difficult times.

Invite students to write their own "Mostly True Johnny Appleseed Story". Their version of the tale should use all the most likely truths we found, one exaggeration that comes from a story they read or their own imagination and follow the general structure of tall tales. As the class wraps up its study of Johnny Appleseed, use the information you have gathered thus far to fill in the tall tale comparison chart, place images on the class timeline, and denote Johnny Appleseed's location on a large map. (Appendix 2)

Possible extension activities for the week include reading the My First Little House Books adapted from the original by Laura Ingalls Wilder such as Going West and making apple dolls to gain an understanding of life as a child on the pioneer.

Week 2: Different Perspectives: Tall Tales about David Crockett

*Goals:* Place tall tale figures within historical context. Understand the term 'perspective' and consider author's purpose in analyzing a source.

*Activities:*

Introduce Davy Crockett by reading the introductory page from Davy Crockett and the Great Mississippi Snag<sup>18</sup> and fill in the story, geography and historical content sections of the Tall Tale Comparison Chart. Explain that this tall tale can be traced back to its primary source. Project the Davy Crockett Almanac<sup>19</sup> from 1846:

<https://archive.org/details/crockettalmannacc1846croc> . Remind the children that in

addition to telling tall tales aloud, many people wrote them down and published them in newspapers and magazines. Click through the pages and ask children to make observations and connections to our previous studies. As children observe they will notice that many stories are about overpowering animals, Native Americans and weather. Point out the contrast between these themes and the values we noted from Johnny Appleseed. Turn to the page titled “Crocket and the Great Snag” and explain that the story we are about to read comes from this tale published in 1846. Read Meister’s version of the tale and work together to fill in the last two columns of the class chart.

In the next activity, children will learn the term ‘perspective’ and consider how differing perspectives might influence the way a story is told. Place a carved pumpkin covered by a cloth between two groups of students so that one group sees a pumpkin and the other a jack-o-lantern. Ask the children to state their observations and guide a discussion that helps the children understand the term ‘perspective’ as it applies to their view from opposite vantage points. Connect this to the previous day’s story by asking if an animal scientist would have a different perspective on the treatment of the ‘snag’. Ask students to infer how the author of the original Davy Crocket and the Great Snag probably felt about alligators and what life experiences might have caused those feelings. Remind the children that when we looked at stories of Davy Crocket in the almanac he was often battling animals, Native Americans and weather. Ask what life experiences might have influenced a perspective in which these elements are seen as dangers.

Divide children into groups and have them read copies the reading A-Z Davy Crocket tale. Ask students to consider the perspective of a pioneer hearing this story compared to the perspective of someone living in a city or someone hearing the story today. Children can write about this in paragraph form or through a graphic organizer.

Next, remind children that Davy Crocket was a politician as well as a pioneer. Provide background knowledge as necessary to help students understand that politicians are elected and therefore must convince people to vote for them. Explain that while Crocket was trying to get elected he wrote a book about his life and asked someone to paint him. At the same time, other people wrote and drew pictures of Crocket that expressed their opinions of him. In this lesson we will compare the perspective Crocket wanted us to have of him with the perspective of another artist.

Project the painting by J.G. Chapman and explain that Crocket posed for this picture. <http://www.loc.gov/resource/pga.04179/><sup>20</sup> Guide the children to consider what messages this painting projects to the viewer. Ask them to consider the perspective of a pioneer in the wilderness of Tennessee. Then project the image of Crocket electioneering <http://www.loc.gov/resource/pga.05809/><sup>21</sup>. Ask the children how this image differs from the first. Ask the children if this artist has a different perspective and opinion about Crocket than J.G. Chapman. Lead the children in a discussion to connect this image to the Reading A-Z Davy Crocket story. Both are showing Crocket giving things away to

encourage voters, but the story has a positive opinion of him by presenting Crocket as clever as well as deceitful.

Finalize the classroom study of Davy Crocket by filling in the class chart for comparing tall tales with any additional information, and adding images to the timeline and map. As you fill in the class chart for comparing tall tales, take time to compare the values presented in Crocket tall tales with the Applesseed tall tales. Ask the children to consider what was different in history that led to new perspectives and new values being presented in popular tall tales. If time allows, you may choose to read the tall tales of Sally Ann Thunder Ann Whirlwind and Mike Fink by Mary Pope Osborne. Point out that each of these characters sees Crockett from a different perspective and therefore has a different opinion of him.

Week 3: Technological Innovation: John Henry and a modern tall tale.

*Goals:* Understand the rapid changes in America as a result of westward expansion and new forms of transportation. Notice how American values continued to shift and were reflected in the stories people told.

*Activities:*

To begin this week children will learn about the relationship between new transportation and westward expansion through primary source images. Direct the children to view the maps previously placed on the timeline and note the great distance covered by the United States by the year 1900. Ask children what they have learned about how pioneers traveled into the new territories. Based on their exposure to sources throughout this unit they might note walking, horseback, covered wagons, etc. Explain that these methods of transportation took months and in the 1800s new technologies were helping people travel faster. Show the following railroad map primary sources to illustrate the growth of rail travel: <http://www.loc.gov/item/gm70005376> <sup>22</sup>

<http://www.loc.gov/item/98688323/> <sup>23</sup>

Zoom in to states with particularly dramatic changes such as Tennessee or Indiana and ask children to draw conclusions about transportation by rail.

Project this image of New Orleans and ask children to note additional methods of transportation: <http://www.loc.gov/item/90715980/> <sup>24</sup>

Finally, share the painting “American Progress”:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manifest\\_destiny#/media/File:American\\_progress.JPG](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manifest_destiny#/media/File:American_progress.JPG) <sup>25</sup>

Ask children to make observations and then consider what message the painter was trying to present based on the painting and the title. Guide children to understand the progression of technology and the westward movement of characters in the painting. Note the Native Americans in the image and reflect on their possible perspective.

Introduce the book John Henry by noting that it is a story from the 1870s, the same time when the painting American Progress was created. Read the story to the class and

consider what values are represented by the character of John Henry. At the end of the book reflect on the nationalistic symbolism by asking students why the author would tell us John Henry might have been buried at the White House. Complete your studies of John Henry by filling in the class tall tale comparison chart, timeline and map.

If time allows, you can extend your discussions of westward expansion and technological innovation with several options. First, the music CD 'Happy Land: Musical Tributes to Laura Ingalls Wilder'<sup>26</sup> has two songs that can be used to explore the complicated feelings pioneers might have had about moving west (Old Susannah), and the pride in our expanding nation (Uncle Sam's Farm). Second, children can explore additional tall tales from the 1800s such as Paul Bunyan and Pecos Bill and add to the class chart, timeline and map.

Once the class has completed tall tales from the 1800s, explain that although this was the most popular time in history for them to be told, people still write them today. The modern tall tale we will be investigating is actually set in the 1800s, but we can read it and consider if the author tried to use values were important in that period in history, or if she told a story with values we consider more common today. Read the title of the book, Jackrabbit McCabe and the Electric Telegraph, and show an image of a telegraph and Morse code: <https://www.loc.gov/resource/cph.3c10409/><sup>27</sup>

Read until the telegraph has been introduced and ask the children if they have determined what it is. Ask them to consider the story's problem and connect this to the theme of man versus machine in John Henry. Continue reading until Jackrabbit loses the race and takes the stagecoach home. Ask the children to reflect on how this differs from John Henry. In that story people were concerned about new technology taking over their way of life. Ask the children if this is a concern today, or if we generally accept new technology. Read the remainder of the book and fill in the class chart for comparing tall tales. Guide the children in a final reflection regarding how tall tales represent the perspectives, experiences and values of people in certain periods of history.

To finalize the lessons on tall tales and demonstrate understanding, the children will consider a value that they believe is strong in our culture today and compose a novel tall tale that illustrates that value. Provide students with the Tall Tale Prewriting worksheet (Appendix 2) to generate ideas. An option to link this end to the beginning is to return the dried apple doll and have students dress the doll as a character from their story.

## **Session 2: The Thanksgiving Story**

Week 1: Comparing Sources for the First Thanksgiving

*Goals:* Compare our current understanding of the Thanksgiving story with nonfiction texts and primary sources.

*Activities:*

Remind children that tall tales are part of our nations' history, told by people as a way to share values, make sense of a rapidly changing world and establish connections with the larger community. By studying stories from the past and comparing them with historical sources we can infer what life was like in different time periods, how different people perceived their experiences and what people valued. Explain that for the next several weeks we will be focusing on the Thanksgiving story. This tale began with a historical event, has been told for hundreds of years and is even more linked to values and feeling connected to other people because it is accompanied by traditions.

Explain that just like with tall tales, we will begin by exploring what parts of the Thanksgiving story are true and what was invented. Ask the children what they know about the first Thanksgiving and record their answers on a class chart titled The First Thanksgiving. (Appendix 2) As a class read p. 5-10 of *The Thanksgiving Story* from the Reading A-Z<sup>28</sup> projectable resources and work to fill in the chart.

Divide the class into groups and provide each with a different resource about the first Thanksgiving and copy of the chart to complete. Upon completion of the group charts, compile the information and assess possible facts as was done with the Johnny Appleseed stories. Explain that only one primary source directly references the harvest feast that we now call the first Thanksgiving. Share the source, located in Appendix 2, and circle the details on our chart that are corroborated by this account.

On another day, direct the children's attention to the chart and remind them that people have made up details about the first Thanksgiving in order to tell a story that shares values and is part of a tradition. Explain that this story is the one we tell at Thanksgiving today, but it is not actually the start of our Thanksgiving traditions as people did not continue to hold Thanksgiving feasts every year from 1621 to today. *Read Sarah Gives Thanks*<sup>29</sup> by Mike Allegra and stop throughout to discuss:

“But to Sarah, Thanksgiving was not about the Pilgrims...” Point out the values that Sarah held as stated in the book.

“And her opinion about Thanksgiving never changed...” On this page it says that people all over America were beginning to celebrate Thanksgiving. If they were celebrating it, they must have shared the same values as Sarah. Refer back to the wall timeline to consider how the movement of people westward separated families and was coupled with a great deal of change through new technology that might have led people to place a stronger emphasis on family, friendship, gratitude and religion.

“Thanksgiving was exactly what this nation needed.” Ask the children to reflect on why, after so many years, President Lincoln decided that Thanksgiving as a national holiday would benefit the country.

Reflect on the entire book to ensure that students understand Thanksgiving was an invented tradition that recognized values and sought to unite a growing and torn nation. Discuss the impact of print media and government action in solidifying the tradition. Record a response to the big question “What values are demonstrated through the Thanksgiving Story and Traditions?”

Invite the children to compose a letter to Sarah Hale. In the letter they should thank her for making Thanksgiving a national holiday, tell her about our current Thanksgiving traditions and explain the values they recognize as linked to the tradition today. Student understanding of the terms ‘value’ and ‘tradition’ can be gauged from this assignment.

## Week 2: A Changing Holiday

*Goals:* Understand that the first Thanksgiving story was invented and became a part of our national tradition through school activities for the purpose of assimilating immigrants.

### *Activities:*

Review the creation of Thanksgiving as a national holiday through Hale’s efforts and remind the children that it was not originally linked with the story we tell today of the First Thanksgiving. Tell the children that this week we are going to explore how the First Thanksgiving story was added to our Thanksgiving traditions by investigating what was happening in our nation’s history. Read the book *A Picnic in October* by Eve Bunting<sup>30</sup> and discuss references to immigration in America. Highlight the strength of the grandmother’s feelings about the Statue of Liberty. Then show the children images related to immigration in America in the early 1900s beginning with a map to illustrate the distance traveled across the Atlantic Ocean. Then project images of the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island:

<http://www.loc.gov/item/det1994002368/PP><sup>31</sup>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ellis\\_Island#/media/File:Ellis\\_island\\_1902.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ellis_Island#/media/File:Ellis_island_1902.jpg)<sup>32</sup>

Invite children to make observations and ask how immigrants might have felt when they came to America in the early 1900s. Show a video of immigrants disembarking as you hold this discussion. <http://www.loc.gov/item/00694367><sup>33</sup> Then ask children how they think people already living in America felt about so many new people coming to this country. Show a political cartoon that illustrates fears of immigrant culture taking over American culture: <https://www.loc.gov/resource/pga.03047/><sup>34</sup>. Guide the children to understand the symbolism in the cartoon and revise their answer to the previous question to note that Americans were fearful that immigrant culture would displace American culture. Ask the children how Americans might have responded to this fear.

On another day, refer back to the political cartoon to explain that when immigrants came to this country they brought different foods, religions, languages and other pieces of

culture with them. Some Americans were concerned that these people would change the way Americans lived. One way to cope with this was to find ways to teach immigrants about American culture. Read a text of the First Thanksgiving story that has some inaccuracies and highlights the Native Americans welcoming and helping the Pilgrims such as *The Pilgrims' First Thanksgiving* by Ann McGovern.<sup>35</sup> While reading make a point to note the inaccuracies as proof that this is a story that has been stretched, like a tall tale, for a purpose. Guide the children to make observations relating the pilgrims to immigrants in America in the early 1900s. Ask students how they think we taught immigrants in the 1900s about Thanksgiving? Project the following images and discuss: <http://loc.gov/pictures/item/ggb2004010001/><sup>36</sup> <http://www.loc.gov/item/npc2008010123/><sup>37</sup>

Guide them to understand that Thanksgiving was taught in schools beginning in the early 1900s. Classrooms told the story of the First Thanksgiving and held reenactments. Refer back to the chart from our original Thanksgiving investigation and note that the truths we found on that chart are stretched in the First Thanksgiving story. Guide the children to discuss what values were highlighted by stretching these truths. Add to the big question chart to answer “What values are demonstrated through the Thanksgiving Story and Traditions?” based on new learning.

While these lessons are occurring in the classroom, children can explore the concept of immigration in America in guided reading groups with historical fiction such as *Molly's Pilgrim* by Barbara Cohen or *Lily and Miss Liberty* by Carla Stevens.

Weeks 3 and 4: Modern Thanksgiving Stories and the Values they portray

*Goals:* Explore modern Thanksgiving stories and connect them with current values.

*Activities:*

Remind the children that so far we have learned that Thanksgiving is a tradition invented to help bring people together in our country and pass on shared values. Refer to the big question chart to address the values discovered in previous lessons. Ask students if they believe Thanksgiving still serves the purpose of passing on shared values and uniting the nation through common traditions.

Read the story *How Many Days to America*<sup>38</sup> by Eve Bunting and discuss. How is this story similar to the traditional pilgrim story? Do we still have people moving from other countries to America today? What value does this modern thanksgiving story represent? Add to the big question chart.

Read the story *Gracias the Thanksgiving Turkey*<sup>39</sup> by Joy Cowley, discuss possible values represented and note them on the big question chart. Note that in this

Thanksgiving story the tradition of eating turkey is changed, but the value stays the same. Do they think it is possible to invent new traditions and still have the same values?

Remind the children that we have seen how the Thanksgiving tradition and story have changed over time, but that the main values of bringing people together and being thankful have generally stayed the same. Ask the class if we think we can create our own Thanksgiving tradition that will demonstrate something we value. Invite the children to choose a value and brainstorm ideas for a classroom Thanksgiving tradition. Carry out the class's new tradition and create a plan to ensure it continues in the future.

In addition to the invention of a tradition, the children will engage in one final activity to assess their understanding of a few key concepts in this unit. Show the book *The Thanksgiving Door*<sup>40</sup> by Debby Atwell and explain that this is a modern Thanksgiving story that ends with the possibility of the invention of a new Thanksgiving tradition to represent the character's values. Read the book to the class and ask them to respond to the following questions: How is the Thanksgiving that Ed and Ann experience in this story different from what they are used to? What values does this story represent? Write a sequel to the story that explains how both families in the story will celebrate Thanksgiving next year. Responses to these questions should help the teacher gauge how well the students understand the relationship between stories, values, and traditions.

## Appendix I: Implementing Teaching Standards

Common Core State Standard: ELA-Literacy. RL, Key Idea and Details

The following standards require that children read literature for understanding, recognizing that stories often convey values through the plot and characters' actions. This links directly to our studies of tall tales modern Thanksgiving stories.

- 1.2 Retell stories, including key details, and demonstrate understanding of their central message or lesson.
- 2.2 Recount stories, including fables and folktales from diverse cultures, and determine their central message, lesson or moral.
- 3.2 Recount stories, including fables, folktales and myths from diverse cultures; determine the central message, lesson or moral and explain how it is conveyed through key details.

Common Core State Standard: ELA-Literacy. RLI, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

In reading tall tales and stories of Thanksgiving, children will be asked to compare similar stories by different authors as well as different stories by the same author.

- 1.9 Compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of characters in stories.
- 2.9 Compare and contrast two or more versions of the same story by different authors or from different cultures.
- 3.9 Compare and contrast the themes, settings, and plots of stories written by the same author about the same or similar characters

North Carolina Essential Standards: History

- 1. H1 Understand that history tells a story of how people and events changed society over time.
  - The clarifying objectives for this standard explicitly state that change should be taught through studies of folklore and celebrations within local communities, as addressed by our tall tale and Thanksgiving studies.
- 2. H.1 Understand how various sources provide information about the past.
  - Our unit will consider sources ranging from fiction, nonfiction, primary source texts and images. The clarifying objectives also state that second graders should learn about timelines, historical figures and variation in the interpretation of time periods, which will be addressed throughout the unit.
- 3. H.2 Use historical thinking skills to understand the context of events, people and places.
  - This standard is clarified as addressing change over time and multiple perspectives, concepts that will be addressed with our timeline creation and studies of historical figures within tall tales.

## Appendix 2: Examples of Materials for Classroom Use

Tall Tale Comparison				
Story/ Character	geography/Setting	Historical Context	Interesting Language	Character Traits/ Implied Values
Johnny Appleseed				
Davy Crockett				
John Henry				
Jackrabbit McCabe				

Johnny Appleseed Source Comparison	
When was he born?	
Method of Travel	
Appearance	
Locations	
Interactions with people	
Interactions with nature	

Tall Tale Prewriting	
Hero	
Character Traits/ Values	
Extraordinary Childhood	
Problem	
Solution	

	The First Thanksgiving	
	What we think...	What we learned...
Who?		
When?		
Why?		
Food?		
Activities?		

Thanksgiving Primary Source: Modern Spelling from Mourt's Relation by Edward Winslow
"Our harvest being gotten in, our governor sent four men on fowling, that so we might after a special manner rejoice together, after we had gathered the fruits of our labors; they four in one day killed as much fowl, as with a little help beside, served the Company almost a week, at which time amongst other Recreations, we exercised our Arms, many of the Indians coming amongst us, and amongst the rest their greatest king

Massasoit, with some ninety men, whom for three days we entertained and feasted, and they went out and killed five Deer, which they brought to the Plantation and bestowed on our Governor, and upon the Captain and others. And although it be not always so plentiful, as it was at this time with us, yet by the goodness of God, we are so far from want, that we often wish you partakers of our plenty."<sup>41</sup>

## Reading List for Students

### Tall Tales

Osborne, Mary Pope, and Michael McCurdy. *American Tall Tales*. New York: Knopf. 1991. This book is a collection of tall tales appropriate as read-alouds for lower elementary students. The tales include Johnny Appleseed, Davy Crockett, John Henry and many others.

"Reading A-Z." : The Online Leveled Reading Program with Downloadable Books to Print and Assemble. Accessed October 29, 2015. This is a useful source of printable and online texts that are leveled for easier assignment to individual student needs. The close reading packs are short versions of the stories, lending themselves to closer analysis of the text. Tall tales available include John Henry, Davy Crockett, Johnny Appleseed and Mike Fink.

### *Johnny Appleseed Sources*

Aliki. *The Story of Johnny Appleseed*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall. 1963. This simple retelling is useful for earlier readers or a class read-aloud for first graders. The format reads more as a biography than a tall tale, but has many inaccuracies that can be compared with other stories to separate fact from fiction.

Hodges, Margaret, and Kimberly Bulcken Root. *The True Tale of Johnny Appleseed*. New York: Holiday House. 1997. Despite the title, this book is a combination of historical facts and tall tale fictions. The last pages include several paragraphs about United States history in the early 1800s, inviting students to consider the intersection between myth and history.

Kellogg, Steven. *Johnny Appleseed: A Tall Tale*. New York: Morrow Junior Books. 1988. This version of the story is punctuated by beautiful illustrations and includes more exaggeration than the other retellings.

Powell, Martin, and M. A. Lamoreaux. *The legend of Johnny Appleseed [the graphic novel]*. Minneapolis: Stone Arch Books. 2010. This graphic novel will appeal to reluctant readers in particular. It includes both facts and fictions that are useful for the class discussion during the Johnny Appleseed lessons.

Yolen, Jane, and Jim Burke. *Johnny Appleseed: the legend and the truth*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers. 2008. This book is well suited for teaching the importance of referencing sources to determine fact from fiction. Each page consists of a fictional poem followed by nonfiction narrative and concluding with notes that often refer to a primary source. Use this to introduce comparing sources.

### *Davy Crockett*

Krensky, Stephen, Bob Dacey, and Debra Bandelin. *Davy Crockett: a life on the frontier*. New York: Aladdin. 2004. In this early chapter book each section begins with a fictional tall tale, followed by a historical explanation.

Meister, Cari, and Peter George. *Davy Crockett and the Great Mississippi Snag*. 2015. Minnesota: Picture Window Books. This tall tale account of Davy Crockett serves as the introduction to this hero in the unit.

### *John Henry*

Keats, Ezra Jack. *John Henry, an American legend*. New York: Pantheon Books. 1965. This tall tale character represents the concept of ‘man versus machine’ as well as the values of kindness and hard work.

Lester, Julius, Jerry Pinkney, and Jane Byers Bierhorst.. *John Henry*. New York: Dial Books. 1994. Lester’s version is most useful as a read aloud so that the teacher can highlight the language style and abundance of exaggerations.

### *Additional Tall Tales*

Kellogg, Steven. *Mike Fink: a tall tale*. New York: Morrow Junior Books. 1992. Vivid illustrations, humorous language and exaggerations throughout make this a great read aloud. The story demonstrates the clash between old and new methods of transportation.

Kellogg, Steven. *Paul Bunyan, a tall tale*. [New York]: HarperCollins. 1984. Paul Bunyan is a folk hero from Maine but this story extends his travels throughout the country and attributes landmarks such as The Great Lakes to his actions.

Kellogg, Steven. *Sally Ann Thunder Ann Whirlwind Crockett: a tall tale*. New York: Morrow Junior Books. 1995. This tall tale links Davy Crockett and Mike Fink, while providing one of the only female heroines. The stories can also be traced back to the Crockett Almanacs to provide children with additional primary source comparison.

Rozier, Lucy Margaret, and Leo Espinosa. *Jackrabbit McCabe & the Electric Telegraph*. Schwartz & Wade. 2015. This modern tall tale set in the 1800’s features references to the new technologies of that day. Like John Henry, the hero challenges the new technology to a race, but in this version technology wins. The twist on an old message offers opportunities to discuss how our values have changed to reflect our interdependence with machines today.

## Thanksgiving

Allegra, Mike.. *Sarah Gives Thanks: How Thanksgiving became a national holiday.*

Chicago: Albert Whitman. 2014 This book serves as a read aloud to introduce children to Sarah Hale. It explicitly addresses the values she sought to protect and explains her influence through print media and persuasion of government officials. This book is the first choice for the lesson introducing the invention of the Thanksgiving holiday.

Anderson, Laurie Halse, and Matt Faulkner. *Thank you, Sarah: the woman who saved Thanksgiving.* New York: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers.

2002. This is another book about Hale and could be easily substituted for Allegra's version.

Boynton, Alice Benjamin, and Christa Kieffer. *Priscilla Alden and the first*

*Thanksgiving.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Silver Press. 1990. This book serves as an alternative to The Pilgrim's First Thanksgiving as a representation of a story that would appeal to immigrants for the second week's lessons.

Chang, Norm. *Life at Plimoth.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin. 2005. This mid-level reader provides a simplified version of the pilgrim's story.

Cohen, Barbara, and Michael J. Deraney. *Molly's Pilgrim.* New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Books. 1983. This piece of historical fiction clearly links the school presentation of Thanksgiving with the experience of immigrants.

DeRubertis, Barbara, and Thomas Sperling. *Let's Celebrate Thanksgiving Day.*

2013. This book is available as part of the website <https://www.getepic.com/app/>. The text is suitable for the first week of the Thanksgiving lessons.

Grace, Catherine O'Neill, Margaret M. Bruchac. *1621: a new look at Thanksgiving.*

Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society. 2001. The forward explains that this book is a reinterpretation of the Thanksgiving story based on research, artifacts and conversations with the Wampanoag. Pages 27-33 address the harvest festival in great detail, including the quote from Edward Winslow. The explanation of sources, along with a bibliography in the back, can be used to help children learn criteria for assessing source reliability.

Marx, David F. *Thanksgiving.* New York: Children's Press. 2000. This early reader book presents Thanksgiving as a holiday that began with the pilgrims and is still celebrated today. This book is useful as part of the first week of Thanksgiving lessons.

McGovern, Ann, and Elroy Freem. *The Pilgrims' First Thanksgiving*. New York: Scholastic. 1993. This book addresses children's feelings as they began a new life in Plymouth. The explanation of a difficult trip on a boat, uncertainty about a new home, generosity of natives and success through hard work make this a perfect book for explaining how the First Thanksgiving Story related to the waves of immigration from 1880-1920.

"Plimoth Plantation - Online Learning Center." Plimoth Plantation - Online Learning Center. Accessed October 29, 2015.

<http://www.plimoth.org/sites/default/files/media/olc/navigation.html>. The page "Fact or Myth" debunks Thanksgiving myths through images and has a statement from a historian noting the difference between the past and history. The page "The Evidence" considers primary sources.

"Reading A-Z." : The Online Leveled Reading Program with Downloadable Books to Print and Assemble. Accessed October 29, 2015. Use the shared reading projectable titled The First Thanksgiving in the initial Thanksgiving lesson.

Ross, Katharine, and Carolyn Croll. *The Story of the Pilgrims*. New York: Random House, 1995. The majority of this book addresses the Pilgrim's trip and first winter in Plymouth. The brief Thanksgiving explanation is oversimplified, and useful in the first week's lesson.

"The First Thanksgiving Student Activities for Grades PreK-12 | Scholastic.com." Accessed October 29, 2015. [http://www.scholastic.com/scholastic\\_thanksgiving/](http://www.scholastic.com/scholastic_thanksgiving/). Teachers with access to technology will appreciate this well organized site to enhance their children's understanding of the Pilgrims and Wampanoag. The "Daily Life" section can be used to build background for even the youngest children as the site reads the text aloud. The "Historical Letters" can be used by older children to consider differing perspectives.

Waters, Katie. *Giving Thanks: The 1621 Harvest Festival*. New York: Scholastic Press, 2001. This book is written so that each two-page spread offers the perspective of a Wampanoag and a Pilgrim. The text organization and vocabulary lend themselves to older readers for use during the first week's lessons.

### *Modern thanksgiving tales*

Atwell, Debby. *The Thanksgiving Door*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. 2003. A couple burns their Thanksgiving dinner and find themselves enjoying a feast with an immigrant family. This book is used to initiate the final writing assignment.

Bunting, Eve, and Nancy Carpenter.. *A Picnic in October*. Orlando, Fla: Voyager

Books. 2004. This story is used in tandem with photos of the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island to introduce immigration to the class.

Bunting, Eve, and Beth Peck. *How Many Days to America?: a Thanksgiving story*. New York: Clarion Books. 1988. This modern tale of immigrants escaping violence clearly links the challenging journey and welcoming arrival with our studies.

Cowley, Joy, and Joe Cepeda. *Gracias, the Thanksgiving turkey*. New York: Scholastic Press. 1996. A boy forms a bond with his turkey in this humorous tale that celebrates family.

### **Bibliography for Teachers**

#### Nationalism

Anderson, Benedict R. O. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Rev. ed. London: Verso, 2006. Anderson explains his theory of nationalism, supported by his examination of the growth of nations throughout much of the world.

#### Invented Traditions

Hobsbawm, E. J. *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge [Cambridgeshire: Cambridge University Press, 1983. This Book presents Hobsbawm's theory of Invented Traditions as purposeful creations that establish social cohesion, legitimize authority and support value systems.

Vlastos, Stephen. *Mirror of Modernity Invented Traditions of Modern Japan*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998. This book builds on Hobsbawm's Invention of Tradition by explaining how 'traditions' came to be in Japan.

#### Historical Inquiry

Husbands, Chris. *What Is History Teaching?: Language, Ideas, and Meaning in Learning about the past*. Buckingham: Open University Press, 1996. Husbands explores the ways that history is presented to students, arguing that historical understanding is the result of a dialogue between ourselves, our experiences, and the sources we encounter. He emphasizes the use of primary sources in all grade levels.

James, Jennifer Hauver, and Michelle Mcvay. "Critical Literacy for Young Citizens: First Graders Investigate the First Thanksgiving." *Early Childhood Education Journal* *Early Childhood Education J*, 2008, 347-54. This article presents the goals of

teaching historical thinking to younger children along with a case study of a classroom investigating the first Thanksgiving through historical inquiry.

Levstik, Linda S., and Keith C. Barton. *Doing History: Investigating with children in elementary and middle schools*. London and New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group. 2015. This book recommends teaching history through themes and questions, with a focus on classroom discussions to scaffold higher level thinking skills. Chapter three provides concrete suggestions for creating a classroom atmosphere that is conducive to historical inquiry discussions.

"Teaching History.org, Home of the National History Education Clearinghouse."  
Teachinghistory.org. Accessed October 28, 2015. The 'Best Practices' tab offers suggestions for guiding students to think critically about primary sources.

"Using Primary Resources." Library of Congress. Accessed October 29, 2015.  
[https://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/resources/Analyzing\\_Primary\\_Sources.pdf](https://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/resources/Analyzing_Primary_Sources.pdf). Explains how to engage students with Primary Sources.

VanSledright, Bruce A. "What Does It Mean to Think Historically ... and How Do You Teach It?" *Social Education*. 2004. 68 (3): 230. This article provides specific questions for assessing sources with children.

Zaleski, Joan, and Vera Zinnel. "Who Writes History? Developing a Social Imagination with Third Graders". *Social Studies and the Young Learner*. 25 (3): 23-26. 2013. Zinnel describes a social studies unit that explores the accuracy of the Columbus Day story and builds children's understanding of historical perspectives.

## Tall Tales

Brown, Carolyn S. *The Tall Tale in American Folklore and Literature*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press. 1987. Brown provides a definition of American tall tales that includes its social function of defining and binding a social group. He examines the spread of tall tales through print media as well as the role tall tales played in supporting group identity in times of turmoil.

Pavonetti, Linda M., and Christine M. Combs. "American Hyperbole: The Tall Tale". *Journal of Youth Services in Libraries*. 2000. 12 (2): 37-42. This article explores the rise of tall tales in American culture during the 1800s and explains how the heroes of the tales mirrored the changes in the American experience.

## Thanksgiving

Adamczyk, Amy. "On Thanksgiving and Collective Memory: Constructing the American

Tradition." *Journal of Historical Sociology* 15, no. 3, 343-65. This article connects Thanksgiving celebrations to the theory of invented traditions, noting that some of the rituals associated with the day are linked to historical events, while others have been created as a result of social change. The author provides a new perspective, considering the theory of Collective Memory, and arguing that the understanding of the past is shaped by the beliefs and needs of the present.

Bickford, John. "The Historical Representation of Thanksgiving Within Primary- and Intermediate-Level Children's Literature." *Journal of Children's Literature* 41 (2015): 5-21. This article addresses the predominance of inaccurate or misleading information in children's books about Thanksgiving

Etzioni, Amitai, and Jared Bloom. *We Are What We Celebrate: understanding holidays and rituals*. New York: New York University Press. 2004. This collection of essays explores the history and meaning of national holidays as events that reinforce shared beliefs, socialize members of a community and reaffirm values. Chapters 2 and 11 address Thanksgiving specifically.

"Pilgrim Hall Museum - Thanksgiving." Pilgrim Hall Museum - Thanksgiving. Accessed October 29, 2015. <http://www.pilgrimhallmuseum.org/thanksgiving.htm>. This website offers quotations from primary sources throughout the evolution of the Thanksgiving Holiday. The hyperlink "What happened in 1812" has the text from Mourt's Relation that serves as the only primary source directly referencing what we now consider the first Thanksgiving.

Pleck, E. "The Making of the Domestic Occasion: The History of Thanksgiving in the United States." *Journal of Social History*, 1999, 773-89. This article presents an historical overview of Thanksgiving as a national holiday in the United States.

"Teacher's Guide Primary Source Set Thanksgiving." Accessed October 27, 2015. [http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/primarysourcesets/thanksgiving/pdf/teacher\\_guide.pdf](http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/primarysourcesets/thanksgiving/pdf/teacher_guide.pdf). This guide was created by the Library of Congress to support teachers with background knowledge and student-friendly primary sources.

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<sup>1</sup> Hobsbawm and Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1992. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Vlastos, Stephen. *Mirror of Modernity Invented Traditions of Modern Japan*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Brown, Carolyn S. *The tall tale in American folklore and literature*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press. 2. 1987.

<sup>4</sup> Osborne, Mary Pope, and Michael McCurdy.. *American tall tales*. New York: Knopf. 1991

<sup>5</sup> Please note that this story and its implied values are the cause for much concern among many groups, especially Native Americans. Their concern does not change the story that *has* been told,

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which is what we are addressing, but does change the story that *can* be told as American values shift to better represent the truths, good and bad, of our history. It is a topic that deserves considerable attention. As previously mentioned, teachers of multiage classrooms might choose to rotate Thanksgiving lessons to address this, while traditional teachers should collaborate with other grade levels.

<sup>6</sup> Etzioni, Amitai, and Jared Bloom. 2004. *We Are What We Celebrate: understanding holidays and rituals*. New York: New York University Press. 30.

<sup>7</sup> Pleck, Elizabeth H. *Who Are We and Where Do We Come From? Rituals, Families, and Identities*. in *We Are What We Celebrate*, edited by Amitai Etzioni and Jared Bloom, 44. New York.: New York University Press, 2004

<sup>8</sup> "Primary Source Sets." Loc.gov. Accessed October 25, 2015.

<sup>9</sup> Pleck, Elizabeth. 1999. "The Making of the Domestic Occasion: The History of Thanksgiving in the United States". *Journal of Social History*. 32 (4): 773-789.

<sup>10</sup> Hale, Sarah. in "THE GODMOTHER OF THANKSGIVING: the story of Sarah Josepha Hale" [http://www.pilgrimhallmuseum.org/pdf/Godmother\\_of\\_Thanksgiving.pdf](http://www.pilgrimhallmuseum.org/pdf/Godmother_of_Thanksgiving.pdf)

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