

Fun Facts: Thanksgiving Day - 4th Thursday of November



TEACHING GUIDE

About Fun Facts

Fun Facts are student-friendly handouts that tie statistics from the Census Bureau to holidays, anniversaries, and other observances. These fact sheets—which are designed to be used at varying grade levels and across different subjects—can be used at the end of class (if students finish their work early), during a lighter day (perhaps when a substitute teacher is present), or on/before a holiday (when there may be an opportunity for flexibility outside the curriculum).

Using Thanksgiving Day Fun Facts in the Classroom

Teachers should give students time to read and digest the information in the Thanksgiving Day Fun Facts handout. Below is a list of ideas for using the fact sheet with students at any and all grade levels:

Any Grade Level

Discussion: Potential discussion questions include:

- What surprises you about the information on this page?
- What questions do you have about the information on this page?

Elementary School Level

Creative writing exercise: Based on information in the Fun Facts handout and what students have learned in previous grades, students could write about what they imagine the first Thanksgiving looked like. Then teachers could lead a class discussion about students' ideas, focusing on what is similar and different. During this discussion, teachers could dispel any myths about the first Thanksgiving.

Pumpkin pie chart: After discussing as a class the data from Fun Facts on turkey and cranberry production, teachers could ask students to share the types of food their family cooks on Thanksgiving every year. Teachers could tally by a show of hands the most popular foods, and then students could create a pie chart of those data. (If students do not celebrate Thanksgiving, teachers could include a slice of the pie for "Other" to represent other nontraditional cuisine that students enjoy on Thanksgiving Day.)

Middle School Level

Community focus: Students could look closely at the states called out in Fun Facts for being forecasted to raise the most turkeys. Then, students could participate in a class discussion about what they think their state's No. 1 product is (without consulting any resources). Students could brainstorm a list of possibilities based on what they already know, such as their state slogan, billboards they've seen in the area, local festivals they've attended, etc. Teachers could then have students rank the items on their list based on which they think is produced the most. After that, students could verify their answers through research.

Turkey towns and cranberry counties: Students could locate some of the towns from Fun Facts on a map. As a class or individually, students could then conduct research on the economy, employment, and history of those locations. Students could keep in mind the following questions: Is the name of the area arbitrary, or does it have meaning? For example, how large of a role do or did cranberries play in Cranberry Township?

High School Level

Holiday marketing: As noted in Fun Facts, President Franklin Roosevelt said that Thanksgiving should always be celebrated on the fourth Thursday in November to encourage earlier holiday shopping. Students could analyze two holiday advertisements and discuss how holiday marketing has changed in their lifetime. Teachers could then lead a class discussion on the goal of advertisements like this and how they work.

Environmental analysis: Why do some states produce more cranberries than other states? Teachers could lead the class in researching the process of harvesting cranberries. As a class, students could then create a list of what conditions are needed to grow cranberries and draw conclusions on the environment that best sustains cranberry growth. Afterward, students could discuss what surprised or interested them.