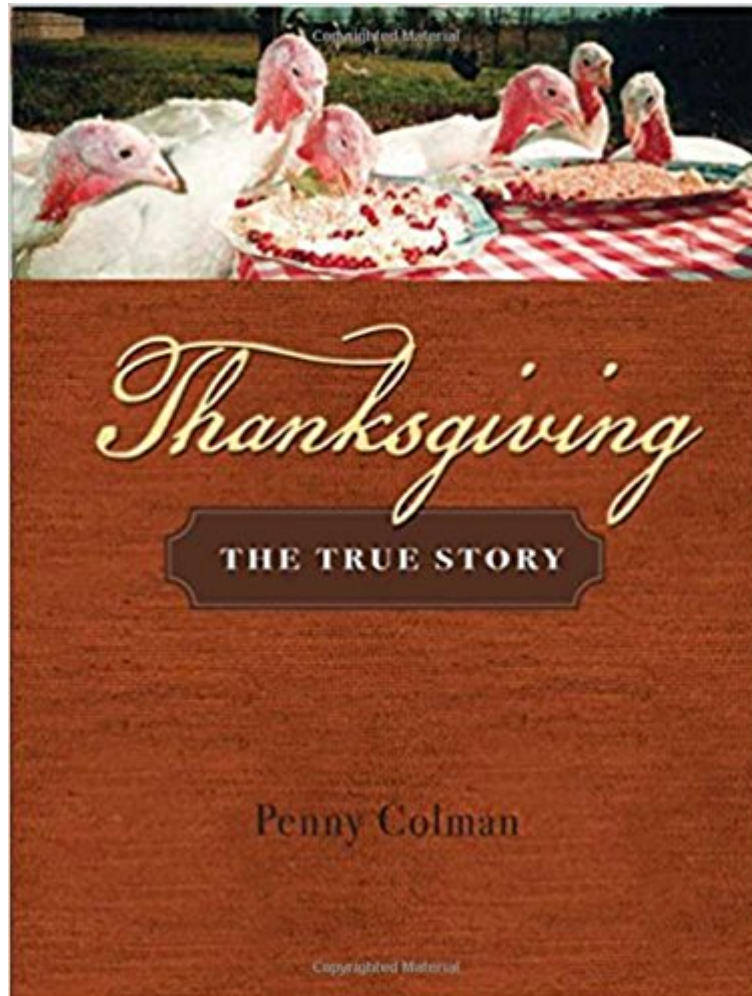




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Thanksgiving: The True Story



Synopsis

Every year on the fourth Thursday of November, Americans celebrate with a Thanksgiving meal. But what is the origin of this tradition? Did it really begin when the Pilgrims and Native Americans got together in 1621 in Plymouth, Massachusetts? In her signature narrative nonfiction style, Penny Colman paints a fascinating picture of this cherished American holiday. She examines numerous Thanksgiving claims which were antecedents to the national holiday we celebrate today, raises the turkey question—does everyone eat turkey on Thanksgiving?—and shows Sarah Josepha Hale's instrumental role in establishing the holiday. Get ready to delve into the rich past of Thanksgiving in an enlightening history that uncovers the true story. Thanksgiving is a 2009 Bank Street - Best Children's Book of the Year.

Book Information

Hardcover: 160 pages

Publisher: Henry Holt and Co. (BYR); 1 edition (September 16, 2008)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0805082298

ISBN-13: 978-0805082296

Product Dimensions: 8 x 0.4 x 10 inches

Shipping Weight: 1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.5 out of 5 stars 3 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #809,698 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #76 in [Books > Teens > Education & Reference > History > United States > Colonial & Revolutionary Periods](#)

Customer Reviews

Grade 5—9 • In an effort to discover the real story of Thanksgiving, or rather the true first Thanksgiving, Colman conducted research that included firsthand accounts, proclamations, magazine and newspaper articles, museum exhibits, and interviews. The first section of the book discusses the history of the holiday and its various observations; the second half describes the traditions that have evolved around it. The writing is clear and readable, and a number of the black-and-white photos and reproductions enliven the text. This title is similar to Laurie Hillstrom's *The Thanksgiving Book* (Omnigraphics, 2007), which contains even more primary sources. Colman's title should be considered as an additional purchase where there is a strong need for books about the holiday. • Geneva Reeder, Lower Dauphin Middle School, Hummelstown, PA Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Drawing on historical research and the results of a written questionnaire, Colman first retraces the growth of Thanksgiving as a national holiday and then surveys the wide range of customs and mouthwatering comestibles associated with the celebration. Both tracks are illuminating. The author opens with a chart of competing claims to the First Thanksgiving on this continent and examines the evidence for each, concluding that there is no direct relationship between any particular historical event (including the one she dubs the Pilgrims and Indians story) and the modern holiday. Using her own recollections along with those of her questionnaire respondents, she describes gatherings, rituals (e.g., parades and football games), and Thanksgiving food—which for many American immigrant families includes—but is definitely not confined to—turkey, stuffing, potatoes, and pumpkin pie. A selection of old photos and prints illustrate this engagingly presented alternative to Edna Barth's *Turkeys, Pilgrims, and Indian Corn: The Story of the Thanksgiving Symbols* (1975) and the plethora of picture-book introductions to the topic. Grades 5-8. --John Peters

Nice coverage of Thanksgiving.

The real Pilgrims didn't wear black. There. I've done it. I've just blown your little mind, haven't I? Isn't it crazy that in this jaded cynical age in which we live, there are still myths, legends, and iconic images that stay in our brains unabated for long periods of time without our ever acknowledging them? Someone walks up to you and says, "Is Santa Claus real?" And if you are over the age of seven you probably say, "No no, not really." "And is the Easter Bunny real?" "No, of course not." Then they look you hard and square in the eyes and they say "And was the first Thanksgiving with Squanto and the Indians and the Pilgrims . . . was THAT real?" And suddenly you find yourself on unsteady ground. Was it real? With all that we've learned about American atrocities against the American Indians can we really expect that what we've learned about this day in school is entirely on the up and up? Don't try searching the adult section of your library for an answer. The best place to look is in Penny Colman's *Thanksgiving: The True Story*. If you've ever wondered, even for a minute, how much of what we learned in school was true, here you will find your answers. There are twelve claims as to where the actual "first" Thanksgiving took place in American. Wait . . . twelve? Let me check that . . . oh yeah. It's twelve and they come from Texas, Florida, Maine, Virginia, and even Massachusetts. Stop and drink that information in a little. What is the real "first" Thanksgiving anyway? What did it consist of? Where did this holiday even come from anyway? With a steady

hand author Penny Colman sets out to discover the "truth" behind the legends and mystic. She tackles competing claims and lays the groundwork for the Plymouth 1621 story. She examines the birth of the holiday and its path to national recognition. Colman looks at the history of football games (they started on Thanksgiving in late 1800s!), long lost traditions, and the different kinds of meals prepared each year. From turkey to pumpkin pie, Thanksgiving searches for the truth and in the process becomes a wonderful look at how exciting historical research can be when you're trying to plumb the past for answers. A Chronology, list of Notes and Sources, and Index is included. I have to admit that it is a bit of a relief to read an informational book for kids that isn't 300 pages long. The 139 or so page non-fiction title is a rare and beautiful beast. Often I get the feeling that an author is so wrapped up in a subject that it causes them actual physical pain to reduce the number of pages in their books below the 250-page marker. Colman isn't like that. Here we have an engaging subject, plenty of visual images to keep the eye roving and mind alert, and writing that hops delicately from topic to topic in a pleasing manner. Truth be told, there are some times in the book when you wonder if Colman wasn't trying to pad the story out a bit more. A survey given to contemporary family and friends about the holiday offers the right connection between past celebrations and present ones, yet one wonders if it wasn't added after the fact. But if this even is a thought it proves a fleeting one. Clearly the book has its subject matter well in hand and kids will appreciate Colman's brevity and points of interest in one section or another. There's quite a lot here to amuse and enjoy. My favorite passages involved the traditions now dead and gone. Where once celery was considered the pride of the Thanksgiving table now it must appear, if at all, on some mournful vegetable platter without fanfare or glitz. And what of the traditions of the Fantastics and the Ragamuffins? Who knew that every year large groups of working men would dress up in outfits that would make a Gay Pride Parade blush, and ballyhoo about the streets of NYC until the early 1900s? And if it weren't for the fact that this tradition died out at the same time, you might find your own children dressing up every year as dirty-faced hobos, to beg door to door for cookies or fruit in the fine Ragamuffin tradition. Some reviews of the book have called for more discussion of the American Indians' dislike of this particular holiday. Yet Colman often mentions the National Day of Mourning begun in 1970 by Frank James to commemorate the Native lives lost since Thanksgiving Day, as well as the atrocities committed against the Wampanoag since that day in 1621. It is true that she does not interview contemporary Indians who feel conflicted each year in November. That would have been a nice inclusion. Instead she makes a point to be as multicultural in her mentions of the day as possible. African-American kids dress up like Pilgrims and Indians in a photograph from 1965. Worldwide Harvest Festivals are mentioned when drawing upon the day's antecedents.

And when a description is made of contemporary Thanksgiving feasts, Colman is careful to draw from a wide swath of foods, cultures, and traditions so as to place the day in a universal context. In its early years Thanksgiving was considered a New England tradition. Since that time it has come to encompass as many people as will have it. So did the Pilgrims and the Indians actually sit down and have a meal back in 1621? It looks like they did. But our romanticized visions of that day have been informed by a host of intentions, propaganda, and revised bits of history that would probably render the original day unrecognizable to our eyes. That said, Penny Colman shows real love and real respect for this beloved National Holiday. I don't think it could be done any better and when you gather with friends and family on this day maybe it would be nice to crack this puppy open and learn a little about the truth behind the stories and the lives behind the tradition. A necessary inclusion to any library's Thanksgiving collection.

Celebrating Thanksgiving, is literally celebrating the genocide of the Native Americans. It is a disgrace and it should not be celebrated. Also, Columbus Day certainly should not be celebrated, this Hitler, was the one who started the whole systematic process of enslavement and genocide of the Native American. I wish we would stop associating him with America, he was not American, America was not even thought of yet. Thanksgiving and Columbus Day should be day's of mourning, not for the celebration of countless deaths at the hands of those true Untermenschen barbarians across the Atlantic.

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