



*In future days...we
look forward to a world
founded upon four
essential freedoms—
freedom of speech, of
worship, from material
want and from fear.*

**FRANKLIN DELANO
ROOSEVELT, STATE OF THE
UNION MESSAGE, 1941**

My Country 'Tis of Thee

*My country
Tis of thee,
Sweet land of liberty
Of thee I sing:
Land where
my fathers died,
Land of the
Pilgrims' pride,
From every
mountainside
Let freedom ring!*

Samuel Francis Smith wrote four stanzas of a patriotic song at the request of his friend, Lowell Mason, in 1831 to a melody Smith chose from Muzio Clementi's Symphony No 3. First performed publicly on July 4th, 1831 in Boston, it was published in 1832.

The first Thanksgiving celebration was a harvest meal shared by the Plymouth pilgrims and the Wampanoag tribe in 1621.

*Where there is no struggle,
there is no strength.*
OPRAH WINFREY

Freedom's Feast **THANKSGIVING**

Ceremonies to get the most out of your THANKSGIVING celebration.



Host: Today, Americans everywhere are celebrating our country's most popular holiday. On Thanksgiving, we're grateful for our family, friends and the food we eat. We're also thankful to be Americans. Some of us are here because our forefathers fled oppression. Others came with dreams of a better life. Some came against their will as slaves. Others were here for thousands of years and helped or fought the newcomers to their native land. But no matter how we got here, we all benefit from our founders' belief in our right to be free. They risked their lives so that they and future generations could live in freedom. They hoped that we would treasure these freedoms, protect them, and teach them to our children.

Host asks each person to share why he or she is thankful for America or to name a freedom he or she cares about.

Sing My Country 'Tis of Thee (1st Stanza located in margin)

Reader: Without Native American help many early settlers coming to the "new world" would have died. The conveniences of modern life make it hard to imagine what it took to be a pioneer. Nearly half of the original Plymouth landing party died that first winter. Native Americans suffered even more as the land was settled. Even so, over the next century and a half, the determination of thousands became the dreams of millions.

Reader: Most nations cannot claim a specific birth date. America can. Abraham Lincoln, in his famous Gettysburg address of 1863 put it this way:

ALL: **"Fourscore and seven years ago, our forefathers brought forth on this continent a new nation conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal."**

Reader: President Lincoln was referring to the **Declaration of Independence** adopted on July 4, 1776 at the Continental Congress. The 56 men who signed it knew that they were committing an act of treason punishable by death.

Reader: Thomas Jefferson was the primary author of this revolutionary document. Its principles guide our ideas about government to this day.

Reader: **"We hold these truths to be self-evident:**

Reader: **that all men are created equal**

Reader: **that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights**

Reader: **that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.**

Reader: **That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed...**

Reader: **it is the Right of the People to... institute new Government...**

Reader: **And for the support of this Declaration**

Reader: **with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence**

ALL: **we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor."**

Reader: With independence comes responsibility. After nine months of fierce debate, the **Constitution** was ratified on June 21, 1788. It tells us how the founders wanted our new nation to be governed and how future generations could adapt the original laws for changing times.

Reader: It distributes the powers of government across three branches: the legislative (Congress), executive (the President and the cabinet), and judiciary (the courts). This system helps to ensure that all opinions are heard in a national debate. It also prevents any one branch of government from becoming too powerful.

ALL: **"We the People of the United States**

Reader: **in Order to form a more perfect Union**

Reader: **establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquillity, provide for the common defense**

Reader: **promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity**

ALL: **do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."**

ALL: **"PROCLAIM FREEDOM THROUGHOUT THE LAND UNTO ALL THE INHABITANTS THEREOF."***

Reader: The Second Continental Congress passed ten amendments to the Constitution on December 15, 1791 called **The Bill of Rights**. It protects individual and states' rights from federal government intrusion. The best known amendment may well be the first:

ALL: **"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances."**

Host: Seventeen more constitutional amendments have been added since 1791. They reflect the will of the majority of the people. America remains vibrant as long as everyone obeys the law—or chooses to properly challenge it. This is our strength.

Reader: We give thanks that those who traveled to celebrate Thanksgiving with us had the freedom to do so.

Reader: We give thanks that we can say what we want to say, without looking over our shoulder to see if we are being reported.

Reader: We give thanks that we can vote so that each one of us has a voice in America.

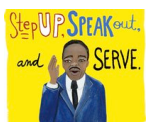
Host: On this day of Thanksgiving we thank those who founded our country with these documents that continue to guide us.

ALL: **We give thanks for the blessings in our lives and for the privilege, responsibility and honor of being Americans.**

*Sing God Bless America
(or another song of your choice)*

Enjoy your meal!

Share your own coming to America stories or discuss experiences you've had as Americans this past year.



MLK DAY



PRESIDENTS' DAY



MEMORIAL DAY



INDEPENDENCE DAY



LABOR DAY

Share your experience with us on [facebook](#) or [twitter](#)!

1775 Demographics

Number of colonies: 13

Total population:
2.5 million

Slave population:
20% of all Americans
50% of all Virginians
67% of all South Carolinians

High and Low Immigration
Years from 1840 to 2008:

1991: 1,826,595

1933: 23,068

Today, there are 140-160
different Native American
tribes.

**This quote from Leviticus
25:10 was inscribed on
the State House bell in
Philadelphia in 1752.
Abolitionists renamed it
the Liberty Bell in 1837.*

President Washington
designated the first
national "Thanksgiving
Day" on November 26,
1789 to give thanks for
the Constitution. President
Lincoln made it a permanent
holiday on October 3, 1863 to
be a time for Americans to
renew our pledge to the
Constitution.

Beginning in 1837, [Sarah
Josepha Hale](#) waged a
relentless 38-year campaign
to make Thanksgiving a
National Holiday. That finally
happened in 1941.

*What's your favorite
amendment?*

[http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/
charters/constitution.html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution.html)

God Bless America

*God bless America,
land that I love
Stand beside her
and guide her
Through the night
with the light
from above.
From the mountains
to the prairies,
To the ocean white
with foam
God bless America,
My home sweet home.
God bless America,
My home sweet home.*

Irving Berlin wrote "God Bless America" in 1938 for Kate Smith to sing on her regular radio show. First broadcast November 11, 1938, "God Bless America" quickly became her signature song and one of America's most loved patriotic songs.

