



# The History of Thanksgiving

An investigation of the American tradition.

# Warm Up

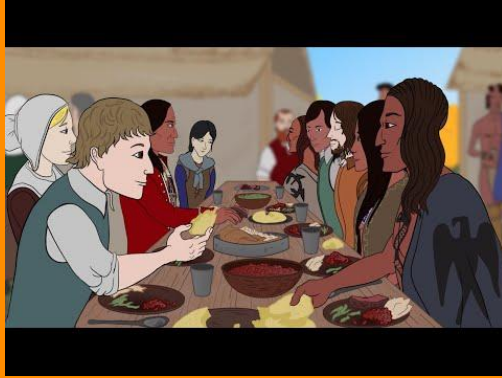
What do you know or wonder about the history of Thanksgiving?





# Myths and Misconceptions

What stood out to you in this video?  
Were you surprised by any arguments made in this video?



# What Actually Happened?

How does the information in this video compare to the arguments in the last video?



# The Foods

"They begane now to gather in ye small harvest... being all well recovered in health & strength, and had all things in good plenty; [they] were exercised in fishing, aboute codd, & bass, & other fish... And now begane to come in store of **foule** (*birds*)... ther was great store of wild Turkeys... besids venison, &c. Besids, they had... Indean corn to that proportion..."

William Bradford, *Of Plimoth Plantation*



# What Did They Have?

	Main Meal		Desserts
	Turkey		Apples
	Ham		Cranberries
	Corn		Pumpkins
	Fish		Pie

# The Feast?

"our harvest being gotten in, our governour sent foure men on **fowling** (*to kill birds*), that so we might ...rejoyce together... at which time amongst other Recreations, we **exercised our Armes** (*fired our weapons*), many of the Indians coming amongst us [with] their greatest king Massasoyt... whom for three dayes we entertained and feasted, and they... killed five Deere, which they brought to the Plantation... we are so farre from want, that we often wish **you** (*reader*) **partakers of our plentie** (*able to enjoy our wealth as well*)."

Edward Winslow

According to this source, what event led to the feast?



# The Feast?

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Edward Winslow

Why do you think Winslow wrote this passage?

Does Winslow's purpose for writing make this source more or less reliable? Why?





# What historians *think* happened...

## The “Rejoicing”

Pilgrims held a celebration (not a “thanksgiving”) in Fall of 1621.

They shot their weapons as part of the festivities.

## The Gathering

The Wampanoag tribe had declared an alliance with the settlers. They heard gunshots and thought the Pilgrims were in danger. They arrived to help and decided to join the feast.

# A Tradition?

“Thanksgivings” were generally days of **fasting** (*not eating*) and prayer.

Days of thanksgiving were typically observed after military victories.

In 1637, Massachusetts Governor Winthrop declared a day of “thanksgiving” after the massacre of 700 Pequot people by Massachusetts Colony volunteers.

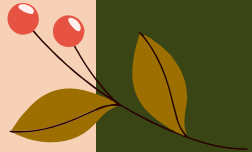
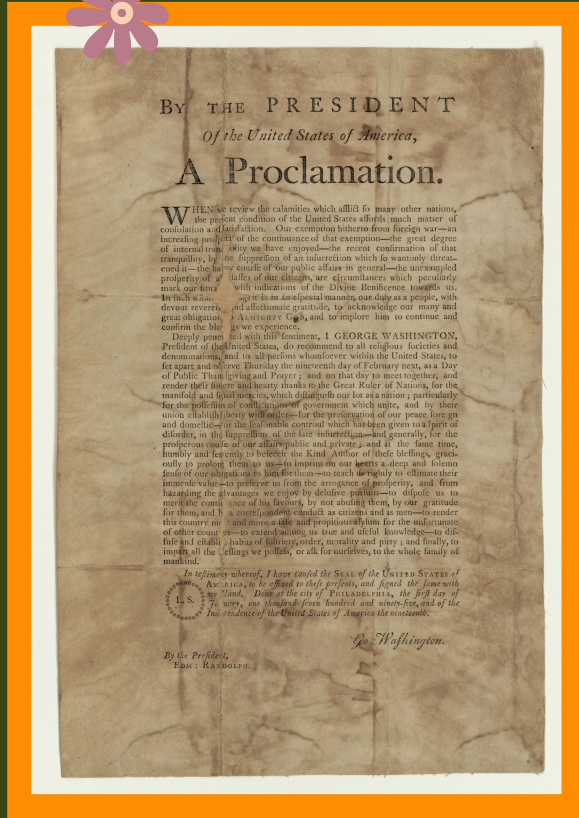


# Washington's Thanksgiving

"I do recommend and assign ...the 26th day of November next to be devoted ...to the service of [God]... That we may then all unite in rendering unto him our sincere and humble thanks- for his kind care and protection of the People of this Country... for the great degree of tranquility, union, and plenty, which we have since enjoyed- for the peaceable and rational manner, in which we have been enabled to establish constitutions..."

President Washington, October 1789

Why did Washington declare a day of Thanksgiving?



# Fast Forward to the 19th Century



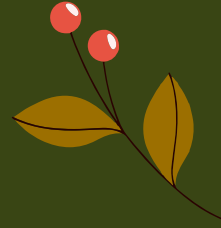
## Informal Celebrations

Harvest celebrations continued but the date varied by year and by state.



## A Local Holiday

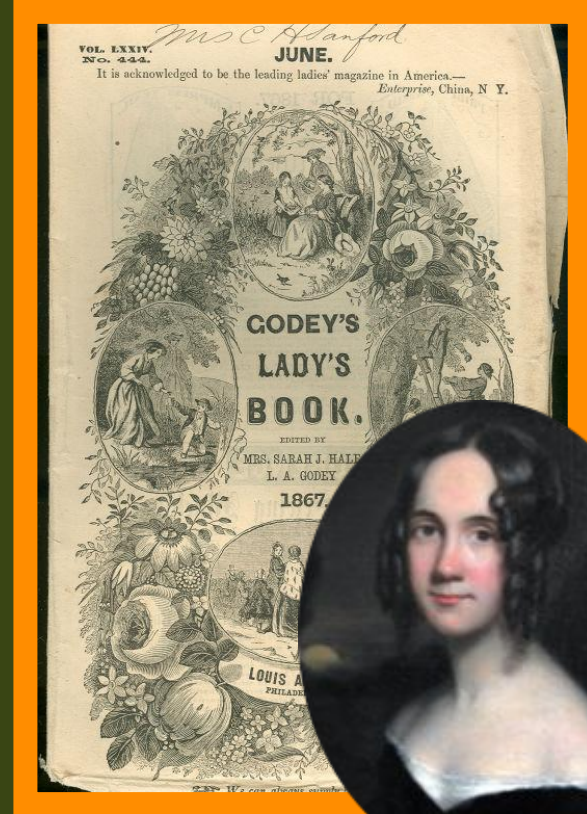
Celebrations were mostly in the Northeast and Midwest.



# Sarah Josepha Hale

Sarah Josepha Hale published *Godey's Lady's Book*, a conservative magazine directed towards “proper women.”

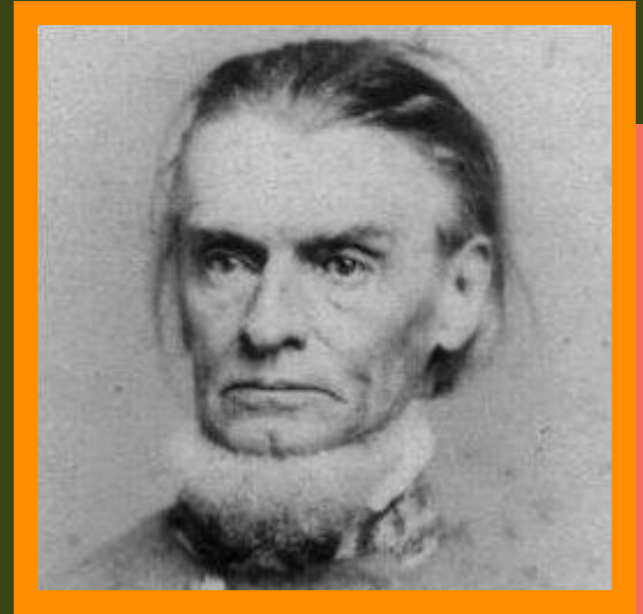
*Godey's Lady's Book* began to publicize Thanksgiving stories, poems, and recipes nationwide. Hale urged politicians to choose one national uniform day.



# An Abolitionist Holiday?

“This theatrical national claptrap of Thanksgiving has aided other causes in setting thousands of pulpits to preaching ‘Christian politics’ instead of humbly letting... alone...”

Virginia Governor Henry A. Wise,  
1856



# Thanksgiving was...



## Northern

Associated with the Northern states



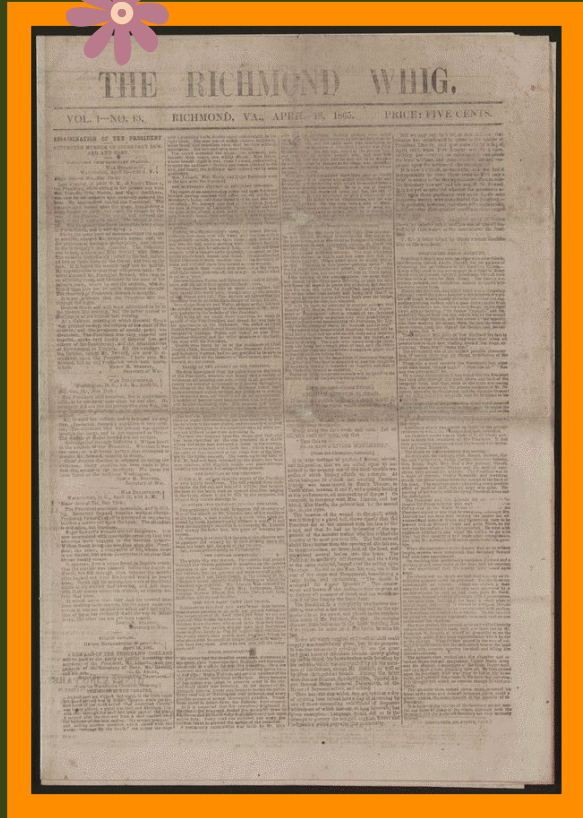
## Christian

Heavily tied to the Protestant Great Awakening of the Antebellum years



## Reformist

Many Northern protestant reformers were also abolitionist and wanted to end slavery







# Cotton is King

“[Thanksgiving is] little more than an occasion for indulgence in dissipation at the cost of character.. While we are content to buy our cotton spools and wooden ware from New England, because hers are the cheapest, we are by no means content to receive her notions of religion, morals, the duties of citizenship, etc., as being the best.”

*The Richmond Whig, 1856*





Why did many in the South refuse  
to celebrate Thanksgiving?

“Our country friends overlooked [Thanksgiving], and came to town to trade, in great numbers. Cotton is King, and everything has to give way before his pale-faced majesty.”



***The Daily Confederation, 1858***



# The Official Proclamation

Civil War begins

**1861**



Lincoln proclaims  
Thanksgiving Day

**October 1863**



**September 1863**



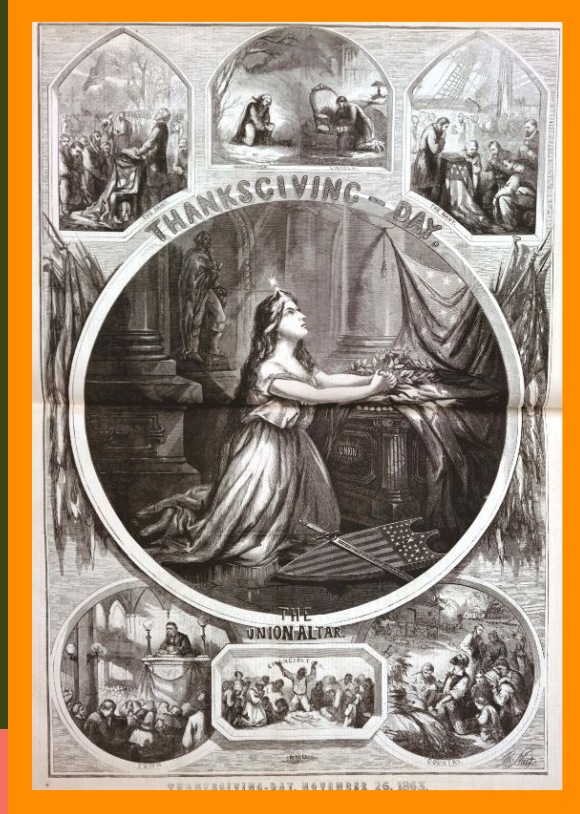
Sarah Josepha Hale writes to Lincoln encouraging him to establish “the great Union Festival of America”

# The Proclamation

In the midst of a civil war of unequalled magnitude and severity... order has been maintained... everywhere except in the theatre of military conflict... the axe has enlarged the borders of our settlements, and the mines... have yielded even more abundantly... Population has steadily increased...; and the country... is permitted to expect continuance of years with large increase of freedom... I do therefore invite my fellow citizens in every part of the United States... to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next, as a day of Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father... And I recommend to them that... they do also... commend to [God's] tender care all those who have become widows, orphans, mourners or sufferers in the lamentable civil strife in which we are unavoidably engaged, and fervently implore the interposition of the Almighty Hand to heal the wounds of the nation and to restore... the full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquillity and Union.

By the President: Abraham Lincoln, October 3, 1863



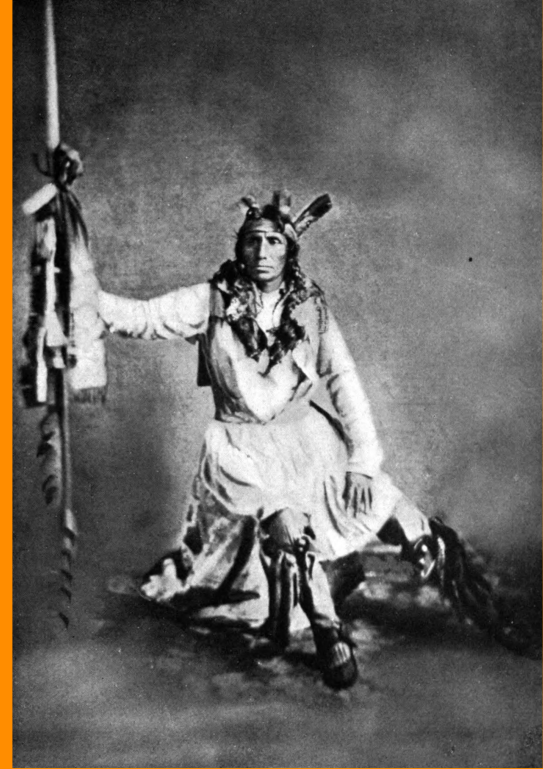


# Reflect

**Why did Lincoln declare Thanksgiving?**

# At the same time...

After unfair treaties and abusive government treatment, 1,000 Dakota hunters fought against Union troops and white settlers during the “starving winter” of 1861.





**~1 in 6**

**1,000 of ~6,500 Dakota people fought.**



**~600**

**White settlers died.**

**~100**

**Dakota died.**



# The Trials

## Evidence

Mostly hearsay and testimony from white settlers

## Jury

Entirely composed of white settlers.

## Judge

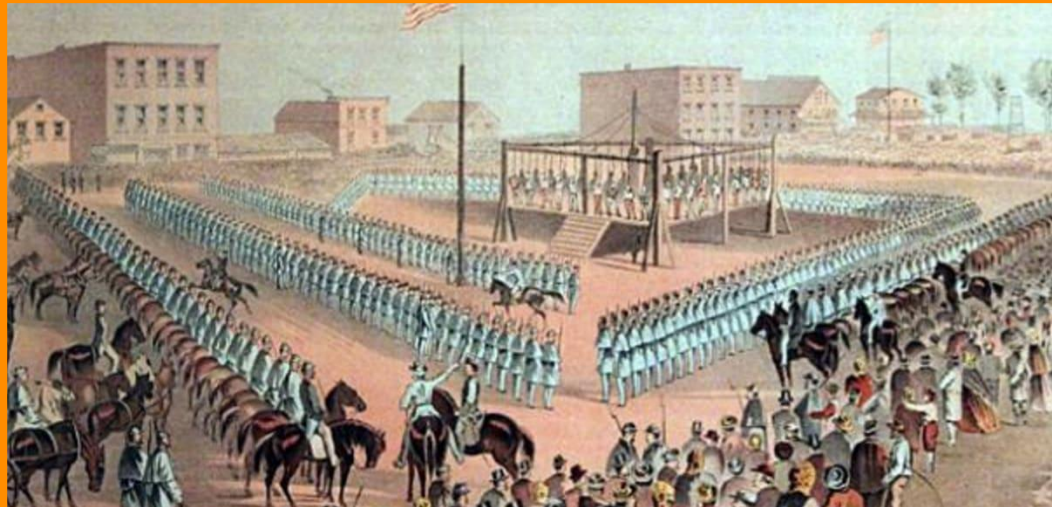
Blatantly biased towards white settlers,

## Procedure

Conducted in English and Dakota men did not have lawyers.

# Mass Execution

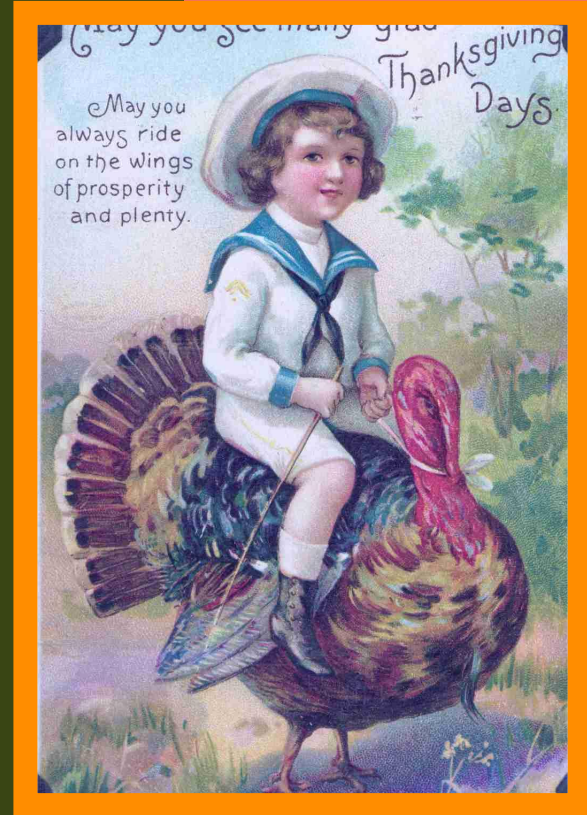
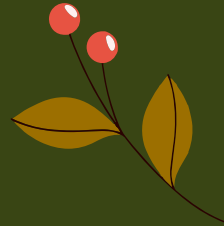
By order of Lincoln, 38 Dakota men were executed in the largest mass execution in American history.





# The Rest is History

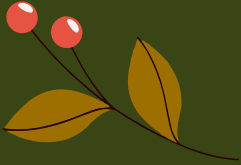
When the Civil War ended, there was a national push to adopt Thanksgiving as a way to restore national unity. Magazines in the South published recipes and gave tips on timing the meal preparation.

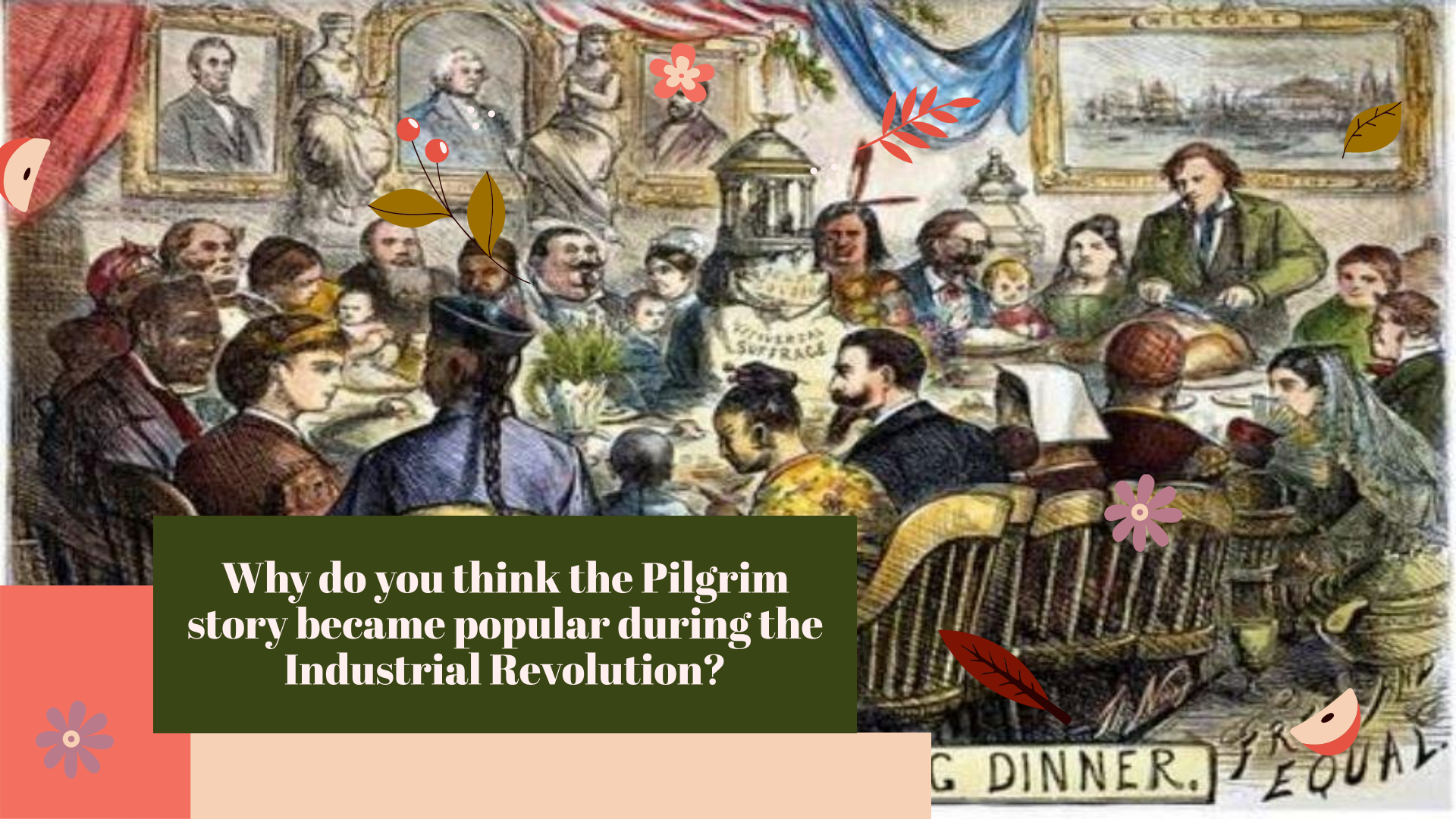




# Rising Immigration

As immigration rose during the Industrial Revolution, people emphasized the colonial history as a crucial component of “Americanness.”





**Why do you think the Pilgrim story became popular during the Industrial Revolution?**

G DINNER.

FOR EQUAL

# So, what now?

**Thanksgiving has meant many different things to those living in America at different times.**





# Day of Mourning?

What is the history of the Day of Mourning?

# Cafe Ohlone

How do the owners of Cafe Ohlone grapple with the complex history of Thanksgiving?



# What do you think?

Is Thanksgiving a... Why?

**Day of Unity?**

**Day of Conquest?**

**Day of Division?**

**Day of Abolition?**





# Have a restful and restorative break!

To offer an alternative view of Thanksgiving, google the statement of the Haudenosaunee Nations.

Thanks to Ms. Howard for sharing this assignment.

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