

Freedom's Feast

THANKSGIVING

resources to get the most out of your THANKSGIVING celebration.

A MEMORY HARVEST *Gathering the Stories That Connect Us*

Ask all storytellers to join the gathering with their selected objects. Make sure that all participants have access to a copy of "A Memory Harvest." Keep the tone warm and open. People who hadn't planned to participate may decide to share a story. Some may choose not to share a story they had planned to present. Everyone responds differently in front of an audience. Be respectful, kind and encouraging. Enjoy the results!

Leader We are thankful for so many reasons as we gather together today. We celebrate the harvest of food we are about to eat and the gift of life our meal represents. We are grateful for other gifts of life as well. We are blessed by the presence of all here. We also miss (mention any who are sick or unable to attend for other reasons). This Thanksgiving we want to acknowledge the gifts we received from people who are no longer with us. They taught, inspired, and loved us. Today we want to remember and thank them by sharing our special stories about them.

ALL **Memory is our bounty. Stories are our harvest.**

Leader calls on first person to show object that relates to the story he or she wants to share. As each person completes their story, ask contributor to display object in special place of honor or continue to show it if meeting virtually. Say the following refrain after each storyteller finishes:

REFRAIN:

Leader **NAME OF THE PERSON (the storyteller has talked about)** has joined our Thanksgiving.

ALL Welcome to our Thanksgiving! (*This may feel awkward at first and makes sense as more stories are told.*)
When the final story is shared, continue together with this:

GROUP READING:

Leader We have been blessed today with a cornucopia of memories as we recalled special people in our lives.

ALL **Memories are our bounty. Stories are our harvest.**

Reader We are grateful for the lessons learned.

Reader *Talk to your children while they are eating; what you say will stay even after you are gone.*

NEZ PERCE NATIVE AMERICAN SAYING

Reader We are grateful for the love given.

Reader *The giving of love is an education in itself.*

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT, FIRST LADY OF THE UNITED STATES, UN DELEGATE, CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVIST

Reader We are grateful for the laughter shared.

Reader *Laughter is the shortest distance between two people.*

VICTOR BORGE, HUMORIST, PERFORMING MUSICIAN, NATURALIZED US CITIZEN

Reader We are grateful for the tears shed.

Reader *The soul would have no rainbow had the eyes no tears.*

JOHN CHENEY, LIBRARIAN, POET, WRITER

Reader We are grateful for the time together.

Reader *Family faces are magic mirrors. Looking at people who belong to us, we see the past, present and future.*

GAIL LUMET BUCKLEY, WRITER, JOURNALIST, DAUGHTER OF LENA HORNE

Reader We are grateful for the memories gleaned.

Reader *The past is never dead. It is not even past.*

WILLIAM FAULKNER, AMERICAN NOVELIST

Leader asks storytellers to repeat names of people they brought to your Thanksgiving gathering.

ALL **Welcome to our Thanksgiving and to our lives.**

Before the main course or dessert, the leader recites a thanksgiving reflection, says a blessing and/or thanks each person for his or her contribution to the gathering.



OPTIONAL REFLECTION

(encourage participants to write their own or find others)

For the smiles at this gathering and the food we are about to eat.

For all the lessons we have learned:

The questions asked and still unanswered.
For the confidence we gain from success and the growth we reap through failure.

For the freedom to wander in our minds and wherever our feet may carry us.

For the responsibility we have to protect others with our care.

For the gratitude we feel for those who work to protect us.
For the opportunity to pursue our passions and the chance to be changed by them.

For the gift of a government that belongs to us and the blessing of a land whose bounty depends upon our guardianship.

For the chance to offer our gratitude in our own way,
in our own faith,
in our own time.

ALL: Together we say Thank You.

A FREEDOM'S FEAST
THANKSGIVING REFLECTION

