

Thanksgiving Story

Category

Yarn

**Time to allocate
(mins)**

5

You probably know the poem Mary Had A Little Lamb? But did you know that there is a connection between this nursery rhyme and Thanksgiving Day, the annual American holiday that takes place in November every year?

Thanksgiving: Mary Had a Little Lamb -

The fourth Thursday in November is Thanksgiving day in the United States. Also, you might like to know that our Canadian friends celebrate Thanksgiving on the second Monday of October every year.

The day of thanks seems to be for all sorts of reasons - but mainly it seems to be a thank you for the harvest. The first Thanksgiving is thought to have been held in Plymouth, Massachusetts, in 1621. In any case, the holiday is closely associated with the Pilgrim fathers who sailed across the Atlantic Ocean from Europe and settled in New England. According to some stories, at the first celebration, the Pilgrims were partly giving thanks to the local Indians who had helped them survive their first year living in the New World. They sat down together to a feast in celebration of the harvest. 20 years later, the settlers gave thanks and prayers for a very different reason - for a successful raid against the Indians.

By 1777 the Americans were celebrating a victory against the British! President George Washington declared Thursday, the 19th of February, a National Day of Thanksgiving. His proclamation stated that it is "our duty as a people, with devout reverence and affectionate gratitude, to acknowledge our many and great obligations to Almighty God."

By this time, nobody was giving thanks to the Indians - as the fighting and violence between the settlers and the Native Americans was extreme.

In 1863, during the American Civil war, Sarah Josepha Hale convinced President Abraham Lincoln to proclaim Thanksgiving a national holiday in November. After some changes, it is now celebrated with a turkey feast on the fourth Thursday in November.

Story

Sarah Josepha Hale was a poet, novelist and editor from New England who campaigned for women's education. But she is best known for writing a nursery rhyme which is famous the world over. It is based on a true story. The real Mary was a little girl called Mary Tyler who grew up in Sterling Massachusetts, in New England. One day her brother persuaded her to take the lamb to school, and there was quite a commotion. So here is the very sweet poem -

Mary had a little lamb,
Its fleece was white as snow;
And everywhere that Mary went
The lamb was sure to go.

It followed her to school one day,
Which was against the rule;
It made the children laugh and play

To see a lamb at school.

And so the teacher turned it out,
But still it lingered near,
And waited patiently about
Till Mary did appear.

Why does the lamb love Mary so?
The eager children cry;
Why, Mary loves the lamb, you know,
The teacher did reply.

Sarah Josepha Hale was the person who persuaded Abraham Lincoln to make
Thanksgiving an annual holiday in November.

The rhyme is also famous for being the very first thing recorded by Thomas Edison on his
newly invented phonograph in 1877. This was the first ever recording of the human voice.
My that was a long time ago.

Happy Thanks Giving!

Entry written by Sharon Venn of 1st Randburg