Children's Thanksgiving Story by Deb Donovan

Long ago, in the early 1600s, a group of people in England wanted to pray and worship God in their own way. The King controlled the Church of England, and everyone was ordered to go to the same type of church. Anyone who dared to disobey would be sent to jail. The group of people who wanted to free the Church of England from the King's rule, making it "pure" were known as the Puritans. To escape the rule of the King and his church, around 100 men, women and children left their homeland, with their dream of religious freedom. They sailed on a ship, the Mayflower - on a pilgrimage to the New World.

These brave travelers - the Pilgrims - landed in Plymouth after their long six-week journey. It was December 11, 1620. The cold winter had set in. The land was strange to them, and nothing seemed familiar. The winter was long, cold, and very hard for the Pilgrims. Luckily, Native Americans helped by supplying them with seeds and food, teaching them about their new home, and giving them the skills needed to survive in a strange, new land. The first year in their new home was hard for the Pilgrims. Many died. With seeds and plants received from the Native Americans, the Pilgrims planted crops.

The fall harvest was a good one. To celebrate their good fortune, the Pilgrims had a feast of thanksgiving.

Many foods were cooked for the feast - wild turkey, duck, and venison were probably served, along with fish, pumpkins, squash, corn, sweet potatoes, and cranberries. Captain Miles Standish, the leader of the Pilgrims invited all of the Native Americans who had helped them so much during their first year. Everyone had a good day of thanksgiving. The feast lasted for three days! This harvest feast in 1621 is often called the "First Thanksgiving". Over the years, the day we now celebrate as Thanksgiving became an important tradition in the United States - a day of giving thanks for all that we have. In 1941 President Franklin Roosevelt made Thanksgiving a national holiday.

For More information on American History -

www.americaslibrary.gov/cgi-bin/page.cgi/jb/colonial

www.mayflowerhistory.com