



## Thanksgiving Story Lesson Plan

**Topic:** Let's celebrate Thanksgiving!

### **Materials:**

- MP3 Player
- soft ball
- paper tree and leaves
- markers/crayons/pens

**Music:** Native American Drums, *Hallelujah* (K.D. Lang), *Colors of the Wind* (Judy Kuhn), *We are Native American Tribes* (Ella Jenkins), *Native American Dream* (Varios)

**Objectives/Goals/Intentions:** To learn the story of Thanksgiving kinesthetically. To learn a Sun Salutation as an example of how people from around the world celebrate and give thanks every day.

**Visual Vignettes:** Prepare a paper tree and leaves. Hang the tree on the wall, and as students enter the space, have them write on the leaves what they are thankful for. Have the students tape the paper leaves onto the tree.

### **Connecting Circle**

1. **The YK Pledge:** Say the YK together or set your own expectations of behavior.

*I believe in myself.*

*I love and honor my body.*

*I will do my personal best.*

*I will follow instructions to the best of my ability.  
I will always try to do the asanas as best I can.  
I will keep my hands to myself  
and only touch someone with their permission.  
I will always say, "I can do it."  
If I believe I can, I can. Yes!  
I will listen to my teacher, my classmates and myself.  
I can use yoga anytime, anywhere  
to calm myself, energize myself, and make myself feel better.  
I honor myself in the web of life.  
And I know I am connected to all of life:  
animals, plants, people and the Earth.*

2. **Introduce the Theme:** *We will start celebrating around the world with yoga today. We will start in the United States, celebrating THANKSGIVING!*
3. **Centering Circle:** Have each child say his or her name and favorite thanksgiving food. Then have the child roll a ball to another student to share. Go around the circle until everyone has shared.
4. **Breathing Beginnings:** *Let's learn yoga breathing.* Do Belly Breathing, Take 5 or any of your favorite breathing exercises.

**Zigzag Breathing:** Lay your head down on your friend's belly pillow. Have someone use your belly as a belly pillow too. Make body zigzags on the floor as everyone breathes from their bellies. Close your eyes and relax. Feel your belly rise and fall with the weight of your friend's head.

**Butterfly with Antennae:** Begin in L-Sitting pose. Bring the bottoms of your feet together, with your heels close to your body and your knees out to each side. Stretch your neck and the top of your head toward the sky and make your spine longer. Place your hands at the sides of your head and stick up your pointer fingers to make antennae. Pull your arms back like they're your wings. Breathe in and out as you flap your wings forward and back, up and down.

**Take 5:** Sit cross-legged. Lift one finger at a time as you breathe in through your nose and count in your mind: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. Pause for a second with your hand up. Slowly breathe out through your nose and count backward: 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, putting down one finger at a time for each number.

## Poses as Pathways/Integrating the YogaKids Elements

Share the following Thanksgiving story as you lead children in the YogaKids poses.

*Once upon a time, about 400 years ago, some English settlers were angry with their king! They were not allowed to worship the God they wanted to, so they decided to leave!*

**Volcano:** Begin in Mountain pose. Bring your fingertips together at the chest. Jump your feet apart. Place your palms together at the center of your body in Namaste Position. Breathe in. Watch your hands as you raise them over your head. Breathe out as you explode your arms outward. Lower them to your sides and return your hands to Namaste. Erupt and release again and again. Make big, exploding volcano noises. Jump your feet back together when you've finished erupting.

*They bought a boat called the Mayflower and sailed it across the ocean.*

**Row Row Your Boat:** Begin in L-Sitting pose and place both hands, palms down, alongside your hips. Lengthen your arms and spine. Lean back and lift your legs up. Balance. Stretch your arms forward, palms up. Breathe in and out. Row your arms forward. Reverse, and row your arms backward. Try the pose while singing "Row, Row, Row Your Boat."

It was a hard journey because there were a lot of waves.

**Waves:** Sit on the ground and bend your knees, placing your feet on the floor hip-distance apart. Move your knees and legs back and forth to the left and right, as they ebb and flow like waves.

*And they did not have much room to stretch out on the boat*

**Moo and Meow:** Begin in All Fours Pose. Line up your wrists under your shoulders. Spread your fingers wide and arch your spine to the sky. Loosen your neck and drop your head down. Breathe out long as you meow. Now lift your chest forward and look up with big cow eyes. Dip your belly down and tilt your sitting bones up. Your back will sink down like a cow's. Make cow lips and moo deeply from the back of your throat. Go back and forth, meowing and mooing.

**Yawn and Flop:** Stand in Mountain pose. Yawn as you stretch your arms upward with a big yawning sound and then flop forward in Rag Doll. Repeat several times.

*They were in the boat for 60 days and 60 nights.*

**Sunrise, Sunset:** Sit on your heels. Open and close your wings several times. Then open your wings and interlace your fingers above your head. Stretch your arms up as you lift your buttocks off your heels with an inhalation. Exhale and drop your hips to the right as the arms drop left like the setting sun. Inhale and arch your arms overhead like the rising sun. Then, drop your arms to the right as the hips drop left. Repeat.

*They tried to stay healthy.*

**Tarzan's Thymus Tap:** Start in any of the base poses, seated or standing. Make two fists and pound your chest. Pound and tap under your arms, too. Howl, yowl and yodel. Feel the power and vibration of your sounds.

*After 60 days, they reached America at Plymouth Rock.*

**Child's Pose:** Begin in Heel-Sitting pose. Open your knees a little, so your belly relaxes between your thighs. Bend at the hips and fold forward, letting your shoulders drop down away from your ears and spine. Your arms lie back along the sides of your legs with open palms facing upward. Place your forehead on the floor. Turn your head to one side and take a few breaths. Then, turn to the other and do the same.

*They needed to get warm, so they started to chop down the trees.*

**Tree/Leaf:** Begin in Mountain Pose. Lift one foot and press your foot against the inside of your other leg. You can use your hand to place your foot anywhere between your ankle and inner thigh. Avoid the knee joint. As your balance gets stronger, you'll be able to raise your foot higher up your leg. Bring your hands to your chest, palms together in Namaste position. Then raise your arms up above your head. Stretch them out wide, like the branches of a tree. Separate your fingers. Balance and breathe. Now repeat on the other side.

**Woodchopper:** Take a stance like a woodchopper with the feet hip-distance apart. Interlace the fingers and swing your ax over your head with an inhale.

Exhale as you bring your ax down and split your log. Come back and forth several times. Remain down and then roll up slowly. Repeat.

*They had a long, hard, hungry, cold winter, but they tried to stay strong.*

**Warrior Series:** Begin in Mountain pose. Step one leg back while bending your front leg. Keep your hips facing forward as you raise your arms straight above your head. Say, "I am bold!" From Bold Warrior, turn your back foot slightly outward and bring your arms down parallel to the floor. Keep your front knee bent directly over your ankle. Say, "I am brave." From Brave Warrior, shift your weight onto your front leg. Pick up your back leg and stretch it behind you. Keep both legs as straight and strong as possible. Stretch your arms forward and say, "My own power I can hold!" Repeat on the other side.

When it got warm out, they needed to plant food, but the land was different here, and they had trouble. They also needed seeds.

**Child's Pose:** Begin in Heel-Sitting pose. Open your knees a little, so your belly relaxes between your thighs. Bend at the hips and fold forward, letting your shoulders drop down away from your ears and spine. Your arms lie back along the sides of your legs with open palms facing upward. Place your forehead on the floor. Turn your head to one side and take a few breaths. Then, turn to the other and do the same.

*The Native American Indians had been watching the settlers, and they decided to help. They shared their seeds and taught them how to plant.*

**Acorn to Tree:** Pretend to dig a small hole. Place an imaginary acorn in the hole. Pat it down and water it. Now pretend to be the acorn in Child's Pose. Act out the process of an acorn becoming a tree, ending in Tree/Leaf pose.

*The settlers were so happy and the Native Americans were too, because they grew so much food, and the settlers wouldn't have to be hungry anymore! So they celebrated! And we still celebrate that friendship and cooperation today!*

*If we take time each day to be thankful, we are happier and healthier. In India, many people do a Sun Salutation each day to be thankful for the sun rising each day - let's learn it! Start in Namaste, raising your arms overhead and stretching upward. Fold forward into...*

**Ragdoll Ann and Andy:** Hang out in a forward bend. Breathe in and out. Loosen your neck and let your head and arms hang down. Make yourself soft and squishy just like a rag doll. Bring your leg up into a...

**Lunges:** Step one foot forward into a lunge and place your hands on either side of that foot. Put your hands onto your upper thigh, above the knee. Breathe in and lift your chest. Breathe out and move your lower body toward the floor. Place your hands back down on the floor and step your foot back. Move into...

**Lizard:** Lie on your belly. Place your hands under your shoulders. Spread your fingers out like lizard claws. Bend your lizard toes forward. Push up until your arms and legs are straight in Plank Pose. Draw your shoulders back and away from your ears. Walk like a lizard, slowly and carefully. Move into...

**S is for Snake:** Lie on your belly. Gently squeeze your legs together to shape your body long and strong, like a snake's body. Place your hands under your shoulders and breathe in. Lift up your chest and head. Pull your shoulders down away from your ears. Breathe out and hiss the sound of a snake. Flick out your tongue. Move into...

**Down Diggety Doggy Down:** Begin in All Fours pose. Bend your toes forward. Spread your fingers wide. Press your doggy paws and heels downward as you lift your hips and tail to the sky. Lengthen your spine. Stretch your arms and legs as long as possible. Let your head hang down. Growl, yawn, bark, and make other doggy sounds. Bend your knee and rotate your belly and chest upward as you raise one leg up and "mark your territory." Lift your opposite leg too. Be sure to keep your hands pressing downward and your arms straight.

## Cooling Down

Lead children in the following poses to cool down.

**Diamond Breath/Bridge of Diamonds:** Begin in Heel-Sitting pose. Inhale as you lift your arms overhead. Form a diamond above your head with your pointer fingers and thumbs touching. Exhale as you lower your arms back down to your sides. Repeat. Then hold your diamond shape above your head. Close your eyes and envision a beautiful, sparkling diamond floating above your head. Feel it grow larger and more brilliant. Now open your thumbs and let the magical sparkly diamond dust flow into the top of your head, through the crown chakra and over your whole body. Feel the diamond light surrounding you. Now lift

your torso off of your heels. Join hands with the children next to you and feel the diamond light move through your group to create a bridge of diamonds. Imagine joining hands with children across the globe and forming a bridge of diamonds; a rainbow of beaming light that spans across the world. Together our love and light will shine in peace.

**Neck Stretches:** You can do this while standing or sitting. Gently drop your chin towards your lifted chest, and slowly roll your ear towards your shoulder. Let your head lean gently back and slowly continue to roll your other ear towards your other shoulder. Return your chin into your chest. Repeat, breathing in as your neck moves half-way around and breathing out as you finish the circle. Next, lift your chin back up so that you are facing straight ahead. Lift your arm, and wrap it over the top of your head until it touches your ear. Let your neck bend so that your ear comes near your shoulder. Drop both shoulders down and let the weight of your head rest gently on your neck. Hold this position for a few breaths, then return to center and repeat on the other side.

**Peace Breath:** Close your eyes. Relax your face muscles. Let your skin drape over your bones like a soft blanket. Breathe in. Breathe out and whisper the word “peace.” Repeat. As you say the word, feel the peace inside you. Send peace to the animals, trees and plants. Send peace to your family and friends. Send peace to countries in the world that are at war. Send peace to all the people you love.

## Savasana

Lead children in a relaxing Savasana as you recite the following guided imagery, *Waves*, by Maureen Murdock.

*As you breathe in... and... out. Imagine that you are on a wave on the sea going up... and... down... up... and... down. You are perfectly safe, either lying on your back in a sailboat being gently rocked by the motion of the sea. And as you continue to move up... and... down... back... and...forth, you will notice the warmth of the sun relaxing you and feel a gentle ocean breeze.*

*You may notice the color of the sky, the smell of the sea air, and the sound of sea birds above. You notice a sense of calm throughout your entire body as you experience the gentle rocking motion of the sea. Allow yourself to feel nurtured and supported. Think about what you are thankful for. (pause for 1 minute)*

*Now it is time to come back. I will ring the bell 3 times. On the third time, slowly open your eyes. Now I will ring the bell 3 more times. When I ring it the third time, please slowly roll to your side. Now, begin to wiggle your toes and fingers, and when I ring the bell the 3rd time, please come to a seated pose.*

## **Closing Circle**

Lead children in the following final poses.

**Grugging:** Share a group hug. The word is a combination of group and hugging.

**Namaste:** The Hindu greeting is pronounced “Nah-mah-stay” and loosely translates to “The light and goodness in me, acknowledges the light and goodness in you.” Place your hands and fingers together at the heart. The Namasté position can be taken seated or standing.