

## Unit 5, Lesson 9: Picturing the First Thanksgiving

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### Lesson Overview:

In this lesson, students will analyze primary and secondary source images and documents to draw and corroborate conclusions about how the First Thanksgiving has been envisioned through art.

### Delaware Content Standards:

- History Standard 2a, 4-5 [Analysis]: Students will draw historical conclusions and construct historical accounts from primary and secondary source materials
- History Standard 3, 4-5 [Interpretation]: Students will explain why historical accounts of the same event sometimes differ and relate this explanation to the evidence presented or the point-of-view of the author.

### Essential Question:

- Is this an accurate image of what happened?

### Enduring Understandings:

Students will understand that much of what we read, hear, and see about the past is based on partial evidence that has survived the passage of time, and that historians and others fill in the gaps about what we might not know with evidence-based interpretations. However, there are also some who stray completely from any evidence which is why we should always question and corroborate information presented to us.

### Resources:

- [Google Slides](#)
- [Resource 1: Vincent Van Gogh's Bedroom at Arles](#)
- [Resource 2: Van Gogh's Explanation of Bedroom in Arles](#)
- [Resource 3: Venn Diagram](#)
  - [Painting 1: Brownscombe, 1914](#)
  - [Painting 2: Ferris, 1915](#)
- [Resource 4: Edward Winslow's Description of the First Thanksgiving](#)
- [Resource 5: Sticks or Strays Analysis](#)
- [Resource 6: My Drawing of the First Thanksgiving](#)

### Procedures:

- 1) **Introduce the Lesson:** Tell students that they will be looking at two paintings of a famous event and their task is to determine:
  - a) Are there any details in the paintings that might be inaccurate?
  - b) Which of the two paintings is probably the most accurate representation of what it looked like at the first Thanksgiving?
- 2) **Guided Practice:** Project or distribute copies of [Resource 1](#) - Van Gogh's *Bedroom in Arles* - a painting of Vincent Van Gogh's bedroom in the town of Arles, France. Tell students that Van Gogh is one of the most recognized artists in the world. He was born in the Netherlands, lived from 1853 - 1890, and his paintings sell for millions of dollars.
  - a) Ask students:
    - i) Do you think the painting of Van Gogh's bedroom is accurate?
    - ii) How might we know? [[corroborate with other sources – ideally primary sources](#)]

- 3) **Corroborate:** ask students if they remember what “corroborating” is? If no one knows, remind them that it is what historians do to check their conclusions. They search for sources that either support or refute details in a document or image.
  - a) Distribute copies of [Resource 2 - Van Gogh’s Description of His “Bedroom in Arles”](#) (there are two copies on one page to save paper). Have students work with a partner or in small groups to draw conclusions about the accuracy of the painting based on Van Gogh’s description of his bedroom to his brother Theo.
  - b) Give students time to draw conclusions then invite volunteers to share their own, making sure that they support the conclusions with information from Resource 2.
- 4) **Transferring Skills - Historical Analysis:** Tell students that you are now going to have them look at two paintings of the first Thanksgiving. The paintings were drawn in 1914 and 1915. The first Thanksgiving took place in 1621.
  - a) Ask students:
    - i) Do you think the artists were present at the first Thanksgiving? [no – they would have to be hundreds of years old]
    - ii) Are the paintings primary or secondary sources? [secondary]
- 5) **Compare and Contrast:** Distribute copies of [Resource 3](#) - Venn Diagram. Have students work with a partner or in small groups. Ask them to fill in the Venn diagram with similarities and differences in the two paintings.
  - a) Give students time to complete the Venn diagrams then ask volunteers to share what they wrote while you complete a whole group diagram that they can see.
  - b) Then, highlight the differences in the two paintings then ask
    - i) Which one do you think might be (more) accurate - if either?
    - ii) How might we know? [corroborate with other sources – ideally primary sources]
- 6) **Using Primary Sources to Support Conclusions:** Have students work with a partner or small group. Distribute copies of [Resource 4](#) (there are two copies on the same page to save paper). Tell students that this is the earliest account of what happened at the first Thanksgiving, and it is an account created by someone who was there. His name was Edward Winslow and he was the Assistant Governor for the Plymouth Colony (where the first Thanksgiving took place).
  - a) **Sticks or Strays Analysis:** Distribute copies of [Resource 5 - Sticks or Strays Analysis](#). Explain that they are to read Edward Winslow’s account of the first Thanksgiving and list some ways that the Brownscombe and Ferris Paintings STICK or STRAY from the evidence i.e., Winslow’s account.
- 7) **Discuss:** Which, if either of the paintings, is an accurate representation of the first Thanksgiving based on the account of someone who participated in that event?
- 8) **Artistic Challenge:** Distribute copies of [Resource 6](#) and invite the students to draw an image of the first Thanksgiving that STICKS to Edward Winslow’s account. Invite some students to share their drawings and consider hanging some on the walls or bulletin board. The bulletin board might have a copy of Edward Winslow’s 1621 account with something like “Artwork that STICKS to the Evidence.”
- 9) **Debrief:** revisit the essential question for the lesson and ask students why their drawings may offer different visual accounts of the same event (the first Thanksgiving)? [one possibility here is that the students used evidence that was different from any evidence that the artists might have used e.g., Edward Winslow’s account]

