

Teacher's Notes & Answer Key

An Immigrant Thanksgiving

A Seasonal Lesson Plan by Chris Bogner

www.TeachingHouse.com



Level	Upper Intermediate +
Lesson Aims	Learners will read for both gist and detail, and develop their ability to deduce the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary from context from an article describing an immigrant family's adaptation to Thanksgiving
Approximate Timing	45-60 minutes
Notes to the Teacher	<p>Rather than a rehash of the history behind the tradition, this lesson is about the cultural misunderstandings many immigrant families face in the US when they attempt to assimilate traditional festivals such as Thanksgiving, in this case to both humorous and poignant effect.</p> <p>The text is from <i>Salon</i>, a news website featuring politics, current events, modern life, arts and culture. Enjoy Thanksgiving from another perspective!</p>
Text Link	http://www.salon.com/2009/11/26/immigrant_thanksgiving/
Image Links	http://pzrservices.typepad.com/.a/6a00d83451ccbc69e20147e0199a4d970b-400wj ; http://2.bp.blogspot.com/_Rs53-MPsJal/R0VEAhV0Jpl/AAAAAAD2c/bzZBldlu5fA/s400/thanksgiving.jpg ; http://absenceofalternatives.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/thanksgiving-hipster-family-wishing-we-were-cool-like-that.jpg

Teacher's Notes

1) LEAD-IN

Board the four pictures which parody Norman Rockwell's famous Thanksgiving painting. Tell students that each is slightly non-traditional. Elicit what kinds of families or traditions the pictures might represent and board into a word-web.



Students discuss the questions in exercise **1b** in pairs. During feedback, find out their ideas and elicit basic facts about the Thanksgiving meal.

2) GIST TASK

Tell the students they are going to read an article about an American-born Chinese boy whose only wish was to eat turkey at Thanksgiving. They will need to decide on the best title (**A**, **B** or **C**) for this article. Students pair check and then get feedback. Answer: **B**

An Immigrant Thanksgiving

A Seasonal Lesson Plan by Chris Bogner

www.TeachingHouse.com



3) DETAIL TASK

Students unfold the paper, read the questions, read again and decide whether the statements are true or false. Students pair check, then go over the answers in WCFB. Ask student to justify their answers by locating the correct passage in the text.

1. The writer's parents have adapted well to American culture. **F** (*rice instead of pizza at my birthday parties... never taught us the rules of baseball, never gathered us around to play board games like the other parents did*)
2. White Kids' Day is an American holiday. **T** (*when all the white kids come to your house looking for candy = Halloween*)
3. Flights before or after Thanksgiving are quite expensive. **T** (*We flew on Thanksgiving Day, because it was cheapest.*)
4. There is no Chinese food in Florida. **F** (*food we just **had** to bring, just in case there would be [none]*)
5. New Jersey is rather polluted. **T** (*I noticed the air... It never smelled this good in New Jersey. And I heard the ocean, sounding like the highway... but nicer, quieter.*)
6. The writer's mother is aware of holiday foods. **F** (*a plate of vegetables she stir-fried with Spam... So this was our Thanksgiving dinner*)

4) LANGUAGE FOCUS

Direct students to match the vocabulary items in **bold** from the text with their meanings. Encourage the use of the parts of speech discernible from the list 1-10. Demo with the example **(0)**. Have students pair check, then go over the answers in WCFB.

- | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|-------|
| 1. H | 2. A | 3. G | 4. J | 5. C |
| 6. B | 7. D | 8. I | 9. K | 10. F |

5) PRODUCTIVE TASK: ROLE PLAY

Give one half of the class the Traditional Culture Parent cards, and the other half the New Culture Child cards. Allow students enough time to prepare for their role play. Arrange the class so that each Parent is next to a Child. Encourage students to use the notes on their cards as well as any other ideas. At the end, ask Children to report to the class just how successful they were in getting the Parents to budge.

TRADITIONAL CULTURE PARENT

You believe that:

- traditional food tastes better
- traditional ways of life are important
- the old ways of doing things make the most sense

Talk with your New Culture Child as he/she tries to convince you to adopt more cultural habits of the new culture you live in. Explain why it's important to keep the old traditions alive and how this will benefit your children and grandchildren.

NEW CULTURE CHILD

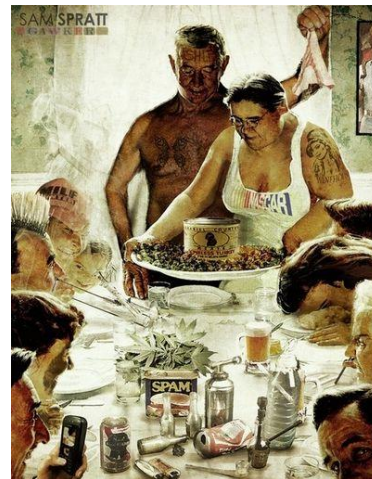
You believe that:

- it's important to try new foods
- living in a new country means embracing new traditions
- some new ways of doing things can be just as good as the traditional ways

Talk with your Traditional Culture Parent. Try to convince him/her to adopt some of the cultural celebrations of your new culture. Explain why it's important to do this and how this will benefit the family.

Student Worksheet 1

1a) What kinds of families or traditions might these pictures represent?



1b) Discuss these questions with a partner.

- Do you live in a nuclear or extended family? What are advantages and disadvantages of living in each?
- Does your family eat dinner together regularly in the evenings or on the weekends? Why (not)?
- What kind of holiday meals are prepared in your country? What makes this meal special?
- Describe a meal you enjoyed when you were a child to your partner. What was so special about the meal? How did it make you feel?

An Immigrant Thanksgiving

A Seasonal Lesson Plan *by Chris Bogner*

www.TeachingHouse.com



Student Worksheet 2

2) You are going to read an article about an American-born Chinese boy whose only wish is to eat turkey at Thanksgiving. Decide on the best title (**A**, **B** or **C**) for this article.

- A. Because We're Supposed to
- B. My Mother, the Turkey-Hater
- C. A Great Respect for Tradition

----- FOLD -----

3) Read again and decide whether the statements (1-6) are true or false. **Circle**, **highlight** or **underline** the places in the text where you find your answers.

- 1. The writer's parents have adapted well to American culture.
- 2. White Kids' Day is an American holiday.
- 3. Flights before or after Thanksgiving are quite expensive.
- 4. There is no Chinese food in Florida.
- 5. New Jersey is rather polluted.
- 6. The writer's mother is aware of holiday foods.

----- FOLD -----

4) Match the vocabulary items in **bold** from the text (**1-10**) with their meanings **A-K**. There is an example (**0**).

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| 0. Spam | A. sensible in a realistic way |
| 1. to pout | B. to smile from ear to ear |
| 2. pragmatic | C. an apartment owned in a multi-unit structure |
| 3. to shriek | D. to attack, with bombs fired at the same time |
| 4. to gear up | E. a mysterious pre-cooked meat product |
| 5. a condo | F. to cry out in a suddenly happy voice |
| 6. to beam | G. to cry in a loud, high-pitched voice |
| 7. to fire a salvo | H. to push out your lower lip to show anger |
| 8. a throng | I. a large crowd of people |
| 9. to nudge | J. to get ready |
| 10. to squeal | K. to push someone gently with your elbow |

Student Worksheet 3

I'd suffered so many indignities already, being the child of Chinese immigrants. Weird fried rice instead of pizza at my birthday parties. Piano lessons every weekend, like some cliché out of "The Joy Luck Club." Fine. But why, Mom? *Why can't we have turkey for Thanksgiving?*

I fought that fight for years, **pouting** and stomping and crying. But if there are two things I can say about my family, it's that they love food, and that they are bloodlessly **pragmatic**. "So what if everyone else eats turkey?" she would say. "It doesn't taste good. It's so dry."

"Because this is a *holiday*, Mom. This is what we're *supposed* to do!" I would **shriek**, every word hot with the disappointment of a child whose parents never lost their accents, never taught us the rules of baseball, never gathered us around to play board games like the other parents did on TV.

One year, right after what my aunt called White Kids' Day, when all the white kids come to your house looking for candy, I **geared up** again. At school I was making construction paper cornucopias and drawing turkeys out of the outlines of my pudgy hands, smiling at pilgrims with impossibly large hats. My turkeys were always smiling at the pilgrims.

It had been a good year. My parents' business was doing well. They even bought a summer **condo** in Florida — two beds, pool, near the beach, easy access to the choicest retirement communities — though they ended up working so much through the summer we never went.

"Good news!" my mother said one night, coming home from work. She was **beaming**. "We're going to Florida for Thanksgiving!" I didn't even get a chance to fire my turkey **salvo**. "It's cold now. People go to Florida in the *summer*," I said.

We flew on Thanksgiving Day, because it was cheapest. My parents, ever scared, terrified that we would miss a flight, always insisted on getting to airports half a day early. And so we sat in the gate, our bags stinking with Chinese food we just *had* to bring, just in case there would be no Chinese food in Florida. We sat through the **throngs** of people flying to their real Thanksgivings in the morning, then thinner and thinner crowds, until it was dark, and finally time for us to board.

I fell asleep. I slept through the flight, I slept through the car rental, I slept through the drive. My father gently **nudged** me awake. “Jai Jai,” he called me, meaning Little Son. “We’re here,” he said. My brother and I helped him with our bags, and when we got out of the garage I noticed the air. It smelled good. It never smelled this good in New Jersey. And I heard the ocean, sounding like the highway out behind my cousin’s house, but nicer, quieter.

My mother was cleaning already by the time we got to the door of our apartment, really working that broom, sweeping away colonies of dead bugs. South Florida fauna is no joke. It’s like we were vacationing in Biosphere 2. There were bugs on the floor, bugs in the sink, bugs folded up in the towels. My mother is horrified by bugs, but she was, dealing with them happily and soaking the sinks in Dettol. “Go see the balcony!” she said to me. “You can see the ocean and the pool!”

I stood outside, smelling that air again, suddenly realizing how warm it was on my skin. I looked at the ocean, enormous and dark, and at the little blue pool underneath me, glowing. I imagined swimming in it, and started tapping my toes on the floor.

“Jai Jai!” my father called. “Come eat.”

We sat, under the single functioning light bulb, and right away I frowned as my mother brought out bowls of rice, some of the food from home, and a plate of vegetables she stir-fried with **Spam**, though I did like Spam. So this was our Thanksgiving dinner.

But then she did something strange. She opened the oven. She never used the oven. She took out a foil tray. “What’s that?” I asked.

“I went and got this for you, and brought it with us on the airplane,” she said, walking toward the table. “It’s your favorite.”

She set the tray down. Printed on the paper lid I could see heavy black letters under a red roof. “*Pizza Hut!*” I **squealed**. She peeled back the lid. “Spaghetti and meatballs!” I jumped out of my chair and wrapped my fat little arms around her. My father smiled, chewing on his Spam.

“Thank you, Mom!” I said. “Thank you!” And we ate our dinner.