



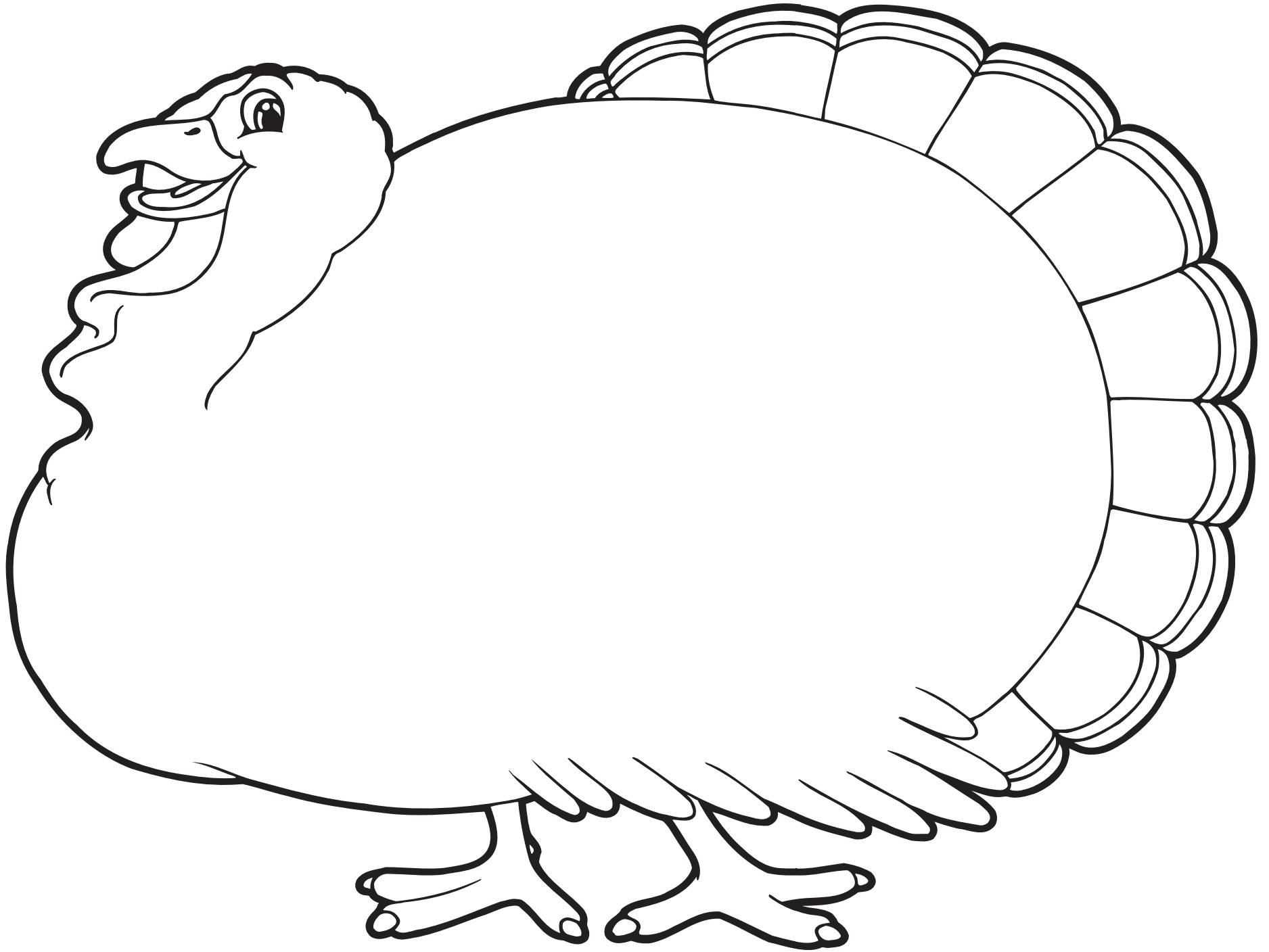
**I am thankful for...**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**By:** \_\_\_\_\_



# THANKSGIVING QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

## Where did turkeys originate?

It was no surprise that the first Thanksgiving feast included turkey, as turkey is a truly American food. Recently discovered fossils indicate that turkeys roamed the Americas ten million years ago. The Aztecs may have been the first group to raise turkeys rather than hunt wild turkeys. The Southwestern Native Americans appeared to have kept turkeys over 2,000 years ago. The Apaches held turkeys in high esteem. They believed that turkeys brought corn to the people and helped them grow good crops.

Early European explorers of the Americas took the birds back to Europe and introduced them there as food. Explorers, such as Christopher Columbus and Hernando Cortez, liked the taste of turkey. By 1530, turkeys were being raised for food in England, Italy, and France. So—the first European settlers to the Americas were already familiar with raising and eating turkey!

## How did turkeys get their name?

Some sources claim the Native American name for turkey was *firkee*. Others say turkey came from the alarm call of the bird, “turc, turc, turc.” And some say it started with Christopher Columbus, who thought the New World was connected to India and turkeys were really peacocks. He named them *tuka*, which means peacock in the Tamil language of India. The merchants who sold turkeys in Spain changed the Tamil *tuka* to the Hebrew *tukki*. The English later pronounced it turkey.

## When was the first Thanksgiving?

The Pilgrims hosted a feast in 1621 as a tribute to their survival through the first difficult winter. Without the help of the

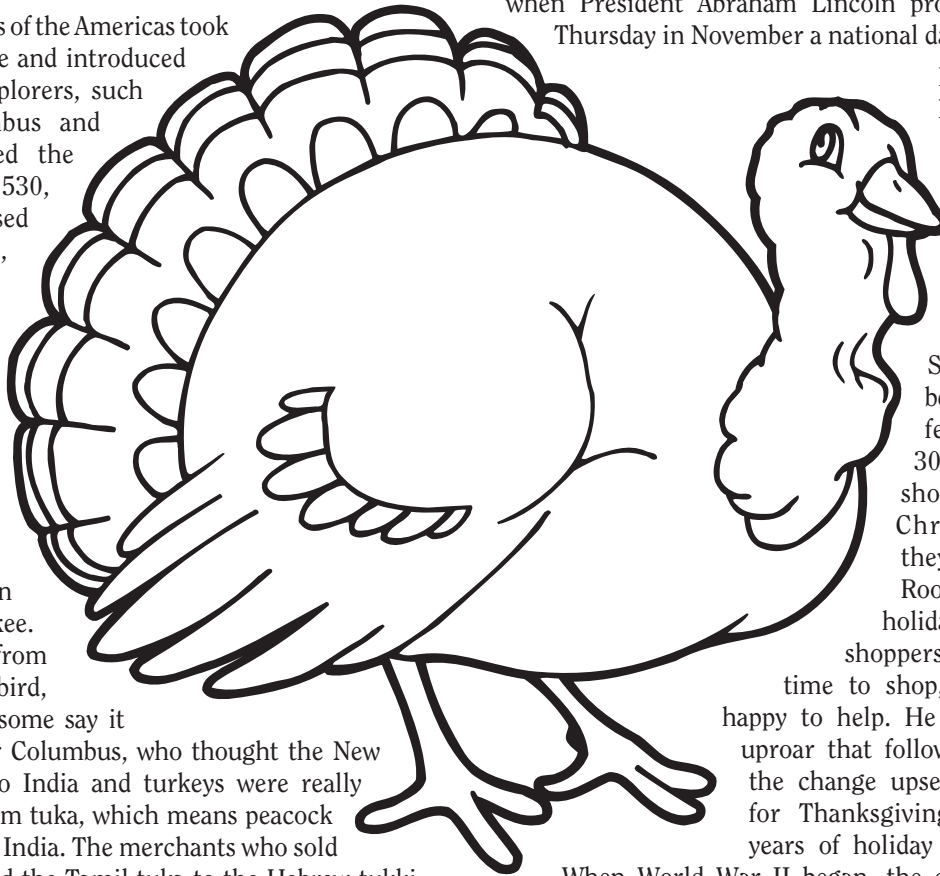
Patuxet Indians, who taught the settlers to plant and harvest, the settlers would not have survived. This feast has come to be known as the first Thanksgiving feast. Thanksgiving is the oldest truly American holiday.

## When did Thanksgiving become a national holiday?

We often thank the Pilgrims for our Thanksgiving holiday, yet the person who worked to make Thanksgiving a national holiday was Sarah Josepha Hale, who wrote the poem, “Mary Had a Little Lamb.” Sarah organized a campaign to make Thanksgiving a national holiday by writing letters to various United States presidents. Her campaign succeeded in 1863, when President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed the fourth Thursday in November a national day for giving thanks.

In 1939, President Roosevelt declared Thanksgiving to be a week earlier than it had been. The United States was just coming out of the Great Depression. Store owners worried because Thanksgiving fell on November 30, leaving only 20 shopping days before Christmas. When they asked President Roosevelt to make the holiday a week earlier so shoppers would have extra time to shop, the president was happy to help. He did not expect the uproar that followed! For one thing, the change upset football schedules for Thanksgiving day games. Two years of holiday confusion followed.

When World War II began, the change in dates had not brought the boost in Christmas sales that had been expected, so President Roosevelt signed a law on November 26, 1941 restoring the fourth Thursday in November as Thanksgiving. It has been observed on that day ever since.



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## USING THE PRINTABLE

**1. *Terrific Turkeys.*** Students cut out feathers from magazine pictures and paste them around the turkey body, using copies of the printable. Display your colorful flock!

**2. *Greeting Cards.*** Invite children to design Thanksgiving greeting cards by writing original verses on the turkey printable. Next, they fold the page

over and decorate outside covers for their cards. Last, each child sends the card to the person it was designed for.

**3. *Turkey Tales.*** Let children pretend they are turkeys who get to do whatever they want on Thanksgiving Day. They write their stories on the printable for display under a caption of their choice.