

Thanksgiving

Concepts: giving thanks, freedom, friendship, harvest holiday like Sukkot, pilgrims

Vocabulary: todah = thank you

Symbols/Custom: family dinner, giving tzedakah/doing mitzvot

Props: Turkey puppet, turkey stick/eyeball puppets, Five Little Turkeys book and video, tzedakah shakers

Tips for Teaching This Unit:

1. **Where Oh Where is Old Tom Turkey?** is a huge favorite in all preschool classes. Use stick puppets or eyeball finger puppets; children hide the turkeys behind their backs and then bring them out for the last line of the verses, which I adapted this year from the standard line 'Way down yonder in the farmer's yard' to 'Here I am, but you can't catch me!' My students responded enthusiastically to the change, so it's a keeper!

Where Oh Where is Old Tom Turkey?

to the tune of Ten Little Indians

Where, oh where, is Old Tom Turkey? (3x)
Here I am, but you can't catch me!

Looking for a turkey, gobble, gobble, gobble! (3x)
Here I am, but you can't catch me!

Run little turkey, wobble, wobble, wobble (3x)
Here I am, but you can't catch me!
(Oh, yes I can!)

Catch that turkey & give him a big hug (3x),
Share some love on Thanksgiving Day!



2. **Five Little Turkeys** is another popular turkey song in all of my classes. I teach the song with the book prop, and then show them the video on my iPad, which they really enjoy.

Five Little Turkeys

to the tune of Six Little Ducks ([prop](#)) ([video](#))

Five little turkeys standing by a door,
One waddled off, and then there were four!

Four little turkeys under a tree...
Three little turkeys with nothing to do...
Two little turkeys in the noon-day sun...

One little turkey better run away,
For soon will come Thanksgiving day!



3. **Thanksgiving Day and The Turkey is a Silly Bird** are my other go-to turkey songs for my 2's and 3's students. Sing Thanksgiving Day a capella with your wings out to your sides, your tail wobbling side to side and your neck stretching forward to gobble, and use a turkey puppet for The Turkey is a Silly Bird.

Thanksgiving Day

With a wobble, wobble, wobble and a gobble, gobble, gobble,
All the turkeys spread their feathers on Thanksgiving Day.
When they see the farmer coming, all the turkeys start a-running
And they say: "You cannot catch us on Thanksgiving Day!"

The Turkey is a Silly Bird

to the tune of Pop Goes the Weasel

The turkey is a silly bird,
His head goes wobble, wobble,
The turkey only says one word:
Gobble, gobble, gobble!

Gobble, gobble, gobble! (2x)
The turkey only says one word:
Gobble, gobble, gobble!



4. **I Went to Grandma's House** is an adaption of an old English folk song, I Went to School One Morning. Wonderful with 2's and 3's, this is a fun movement song where the kids suggest modes of transportation to get to Grandma's house on Thanksgiving Day, such as driving a car, flying in an airplane, walking, running, swimming or hopping, and riding a motorcycle, helicopter, train or horse... end with arriving at Grandma's house and giving her a big hug!

I Went to Grandma's House

to the tune of I Went to School One Morning

Oh, I went to Grandma's house on Thanksgiving Day,
on Thanksgiving Day, on Thanksgiving Day (repeat)

5. Let children share what they are thankful for with these songs: **We Give Thanks** (2's and 3's), **I Give Thanks** (4's and Kdg), and **We Say Todah** (4's and Kdg). Use turkey with blessing feathers prop to help stimulate ideas about the things for which they are grateful. Ask questions of the youngest students, such as 'Did you have breakfast this morning? Are you thankful for that?' Then put the blessing feather with the food symbol onto the felt board. Zip in students' ideas into the songs.

We Give Thanks

adapted by Lisa Baydush to the tune of Frere Jacques

On Thanksgiving (echo)
We give thanks (echo)
Thank you for ____ (echo)
We give thanks (echo)

I Give Thanks

by Sheldon Low ([video](#))

Chorus:

I (echo)
I give thanks (echo)
I give thanks (echo) to you (echo)

Thank you for _____ (4x) (chorus)



We Say Todah by Lisa Baydush ([audio](#))

On Thanksgiving, we give thanks,
We give thanks to God;
On Thanksgiving, we give thanks,
in Hebrew, we say 'todah!'

Can also be used at Tot Shabbat by substituting the holiday.

For our families, todah! For our food, todah!
For our friends, todah! For our homes, todah!

6. With older preschoolers, I like to give context to the holiday by briefly explaining the story of the first Thanksgiving. I teach that the pilgrims came to this land from far away, by ship, looking for religious freedom (where they could pray the way they wanted to), and that they celebrated their first harvest with a big meal, giving thanks to God for their blessings. Use sign language and hand motions when singing **Sailing Over the Ocean** and **Children of Freedom** with 4's and Kdg.

Sailing Over the Ocean adapted by Lisa Baydush to It's Love That Makes the World Go 'Round

Chorus:

Sailing over the ocean (clap), Sailing over the sea (clap)
Sailing over the ocean (clap) in the deep blue sea (repeat)

The pilgrims, the pilgrims, sailed across the sea,
The pilgrims, the pilgrims, wanted to be free,
The pilgrims, the pilgrims, came to a new country,
And because of them we celebrate Thanksgiving! (chorus)

Children of Freedom

by Beth Schafer

Children of freedom sing
That freedom must always ring;
Children of freedom rise
Repairing the world through freedom's eyes.

7. While we give thanks on Thanksgiving for all of our blessings, we also remember those who are less fortunate than ourselves. This is a good opportunity to sing a song about giving tzedakah with 4's and Kdg. Sing **Shake, Shake, Shake** with tzedakah shakers and stamp your foot when you shout 'yeah!' because giving tzedakah matters a lot! Use dynamics by being loud on the chorus and quiet on the verses.

Shake, Shake, Shake by Ellen Allard

Shake, shake, shake da da da da da da (3x)
the tzedakah box! Yeah! (repeat)

You put the money in (3x) the tzedakah box! Yeah!

Helping those in need (3x)...
Every penny counts (3x)...
Do a mitzvah when you can (3x)...
On Thanksgiving Day...

8. Reflect how brightly their inner light shines and sing **This Little Light of Mine**.

This Little Light of Mine

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine (3x)
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine!

Everywhere I go...
On Thanksgiving Day...

9. Sing this Native-American-style song, **The Earth is Our Mother**, with rhythm sticks; age appropriate for 3's, 4's and Kindergarten.

The Earth is Our Mother ([video](#))

He-ey ya-na; Ho-o ya-na; He-ey ya-na ho (4x)

The sk-y is so beautiful,
We must take care of it! (repeat 4x) (chorus)

The rivers...
The trees...

10. More Songs:

- All About Thanks (TTTO All About Me)
- Happy Thanksgiving (Friedman)
- If You're Happy It's Thanksgiving (TTTO If You're Happy and You Know it)
- Modeh Ani (Texas Style)
- Turkey Trot (Brown)
- Wake Up, Little Pilgrims