

Analyzing Historical Artwork: *The First Thanksgiving, 1621*

Answer the questions below to analyze *The First Thanksgiving, 1621* as a historical source.

Sourcing: Identify how the source got its information.

1. How long after the first Thanksgiving was this painting created? Could Jean Ferris have witnessed the first Thanksgiving or interviewed someone who was there?

The first Thanksgiving took place in 1621. Jean Ferris painted this almost 300 years later, so no. Too much time had passed.

Analysis: Identify how the artist has chosen to depict people and events, and how the artist wants the audience to feel about those people and events.

2. How are the people in the painting feeling? What is the mood of this painting?

The people in the painting look happy and relaxed. The presence of a child and dog gives the painting a comforting feeling.

3. How does the painting portray the relationship between the English and the Wampanoag? What details show that?

The painting suggests that the English colonists and the Wampanoag people had a friendly relationship. English and Wampanoag people are sharing food in the foreground and talking in the background.

Corroboration: Compare the source to other historical sources to see whether anything is inaccurate.

4. Look at the headdresses of eagle feathers the Wampanoag men are wearing in the painting. Do some research—did Wampanoag men usually wear this type of clothing?

Wampanoag men did not usually wear eagle feathers. When they did wear eagle feathers, it was only one or two, not in a large headdress like the Wampanoag man in the center of this picture.

5. Look at how some of the Wampanoag men are bare-chested. Do some research on November weather in Massachusetts. How would Wampanoag men have been dressed at this time of the year?

Wampanoag men would not have been bare-chested. It would have been too cold. In cold weather, Wampanoag men usually wore thick robes of deer skin.

Evaluation: Use your sourcing, analysis, and corroboration to evaluate any piece of historical art.

6. What did you learn about using historical art by sourcing, analyzing, and corroborating this painting?

Answers will vary.