

Thanksgiving: Fact or Fiction

with famous pieces of art

Turkey makes us tired
True or False?

False!

The Truth

Although it may be tempting to blame the turkey, the tryptophan from this **holiday dish likely doesn't make you sleepy on its own.** Rather, eating foods with tryptophan in addition to a large number of carbohydrates leads to sleepiness.



**Virginia Beahan
Christina and Gram on Thanksgiving
2004**

About the Art

Everyone loves a good nap on the couch after a big turkey dinner and this candid shot of photographer Virginia Beahan's mother and daughter captures the intergenerational intimacy of a post-Thanksgiving meal snooze. Once a landscape photographer, Beahan turned her focal point indoors when her elderly mom developed dementia and the photographer documented the last years of her mother's life with respect and beauty.

**Turkey was at
the first thanksgiving dinner**
True or False?

False!

The Truth

There is little to no supporting evidence that a turkey was present at the dinner table during the first Thanksgiving in 1621. According to the reports by Pilgrim leader Edward Winslow, who wrote about the first Thanksgiving feast consisted of venison, seafood, and all of the vegetables that they had planted and harvested that year—onions, carrots, beans, spinach, lettuce, and other greens.



**Norman Rockwell,
Freedom From Want
1943**

About the Art

Norman Rockwell was inspired to do this work by a State of the Union address by President F.D. Roosevelt. The artist painted three other works inspired by the same speech. At the time of its creation, America was involved in World War 2, and the painting was to show that despite the country's difficulties, traditional American family values were still highly valued. It also helped solidify the turkey's role as the star of Thanksgiving today.

Macy's was the first American department store to sponsor a parade in celebration of Thanksgiving.
True or False?

False!

The Truth

The Philadelphia department store Gimbel's had sponsored a parade in 1920, but the Macy's parade, launched four years later, soon became a Thanksgiving tradition and the standard kickoff to the holiday shopping season. The parade became ever more well-known after it featured prominently in the hit film *Miracle on 34th Street* (1947), which shows actual footage of the 1946 parade.



**Unknown,
Pinocchio Balloon Macy's Day Parade
1937**

About the Art

.The 1937 rendition of Pinocchio was one of the first oversized balloons used in the Macy's parade. The nose alone required more than 20 handlers to control. The balloon appeared until 1939, when it was retired after the usual three-year tenure. Another balloon version of Pinocchio has yet to be made.

Pumpkin Pie was at the 1st Thanksgiving
True or False?

More True than not!

The Truth

Pumpkin "pies" made by early American colonists were more likely to be a savory soup made and served in a pumpkin than a sweet custard in a crust. Only in the early 19th century did recipes appear in Canadian and American cookbooks for what we consider pumpkin pie, and it became one of America's favorite Thanksgiving desserts.



**Wayne Thiebaud,
Sixteen Pies
1965**

About the Art

Artist Wayne Thiebaud was drawn to everyday objects and American foods as subjects of his art. Thiebaud began painting still lifes such as his Sixteen Pies. “Once I painted pies, I thought no one would be interested in them; it seemed like a silly thing to do,” Thiebaud shared in a 2020 Artnet News interview. “But as I did it and became interested, I couldn’t leave it alone. I looked at all the other things I thought had been overlooked.”

**Over 480,000 lbs of fresh pumpkins are
purchased each year for Thanksgiving**
True or False?

True!

The truth

Indigenous North Americans have grown pumpkins for thousands of years—even before the cultivation of beans and corn. Today, according to the 2017 U.S. Agriculture Census, Illinois is the largest producer of pumpkins in the United States. It harvests twice as many pumpkin acres as any of the other top-producing states.



**Yayoi Kusama,
Pumpkin
2017**

About the Art

Pumpkins are positive images to Yayoi Kusama because they represent a cheerful part of her troubled childhood. As a young girl, Kusama spent hours drawing pumpkins. To her, pumpkins are representative of stability, comfort, and modesty. "I love pumpkins," the artist explained in a 2015 interview, "because of their humorous form, warm feeling, and a human-like quality and form."

**AAA predicts this will be the busiest
travel holiday in recorded history.**

True or False?

True

The Truth

AAA says this year's Thanksgiving travel is expected to set a new record, with nearly 82 million Americans traveling, a 1.6 million increase from last year. Driving will be the dominant mode of transportation, with about 73 million people hitting the road, and costs for car rentals and flights are similar to or cheaper than last year.



**Keith Haring,
Untitled
1983**

About the Art

Renowned artist Keith Haring has done some awe-inspiring work, including a series called “The Unconventional Canvases of Keith Haring.” Haring spent almost a decade customizing cars, trucks, and bikes with his unique street art style. His work spanned locations all over the USA and Europe.

**Thanksgiving was always celebrated
in Novemeber.**
True or False?

False

The Truth

The event that Americans commonly call the "first Thanksgiving" was celebrated by the Pilgrims after their first harvest in the New World in October 1621.



**Georgia O'Keeffe,
Purple Leaves
1922**

About the Art

This fall image is typical of O'Keeffe's unique form of abstraction. Interested in nature, O'Keeffe isolates the leaves from their natural setting, simplifies their form of any extraneous detail, and magnifies their overall scale so that they overtake the perimeter of the canvas.

**Abraham Lincoln made the first official
proclamation of a national Thanksgiving
holiday in 1863.
True or False?**

True

The Truth

Before Lincoln's proclamation, states, mainly in the North, would select when to have their Thanksgiving commemorations. Lincoln issued an 1863 proclamation calling Americans to "set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next as a day of thanksgiving," partly to celebrate victories in the then-raging Civil War.



**William Willard,
Abraham Lincoln
1864**

About the Art

Willard was the son of a blacksmith and was first trained as a jeweler but was more interested in drawing. From 1841 to 1867, he worked as a painter in Boston. In 1867, he returned to Sturbridge, where he set up a studio on his property to receive sitters for portraits. His most famous work is his portrait of Lincoln, which became a model for the Lincoln Penny.

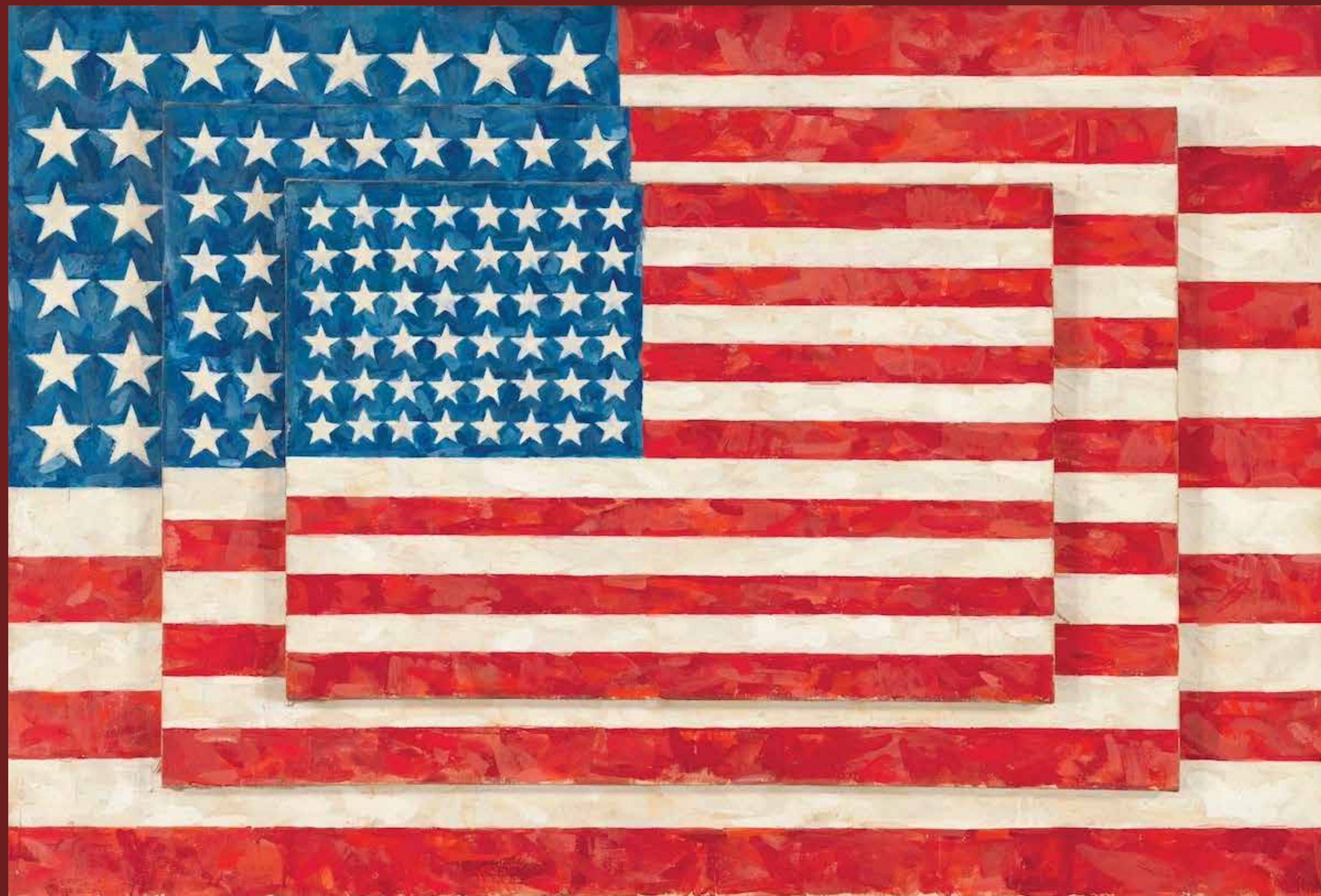
**Thanksgiving is America's second
favorite holiday.**

True or False?

False

The truth

Thanksgiving takes the top spot among popular holidays, with 79% of Americans being all for gathering with family and friends around a giant table for some feasting.



**Jasper Johns,
Three Flags
1958**

About the Art

Jasper Johns' Three Flags is an iconic piece of art that has stood the test of time since its creation over six decades ago. Its unique layered technique makes it stand out among other artworks while also providing critical commentary on American identity during a time marked by upheaval and change.

**Around 80 million pounds of cranberries
are consumed each Thanksgiving Day.**

True or False?

True

The Truth

Americans eat more than 400 million pounds of cranberries every year, and 20 percent is consumed during the week of Thanksgiving. That's still 80 million pounds!



**Eastman Johnson,
The Cranberry Harvest, Island of Nantucket
1880**

About the Art

In 1870, after searching for aspects of American rural life to use as subjects for ambitious paintings, Johnson began to draw inspiration from Nantucket Island south of Cape Cod in Massachusetts. With this view of a cranberry harvest, he successfully realized his efforts to paint a celebration of New England outdoor life.