

## **SENECA THANKSGIVING**

### **Background**

A Thanksgiving ceremony was an ongoing part of the Seneca culture long before the Pilgrims arrived. The Seneca people were the largest division of the League of the Iroquois, a tribe of Native Americans. Today, about 7,000 Seneca live in New York, Ontario, and Pennsylvania.

### **The Ceremony**

The Seneca thanksgiving was a ceremony that the leaders of the group would hold when they would gather together for an important occasion. The original thanksgiving therefore was not restricted to autumn.

During the ceremony, the Seneca would recognize the parts of nature as well as the members of their community who were valued.

Here are just a few of the individuals and parts of nature the Seneca would recognize in their ceremony:

- ❖ **The earth, which holds up our feet.**
- ❖ **The young, who are taking their places among us.**
- ❖ **The elders, who share their wisdom with us.**
- ❖ **The birds, that are always free.**
- ❖ **The faith-givers, who help us in many ways.**

### **Interpretation**

Literal: Whom do the Seneca thank?

Analytic: How is the Seneca Thanksgiving different from the current US holiday?

Inferential: Who else might be included in the ceremony? Why?

### **Connection**

Synthesis: Write your own thanksgiving ceremony. Explain what's most important about each person or part of nature you appreciate.