The First Thanksgiving

Introductory/Background Information

The “First Thanksgiving” was first celebrated by the Pilgrims after their first harvest in the new world in 1621. This celebration took place at the Plymouth Plantation. This feast was attended by many people and it lasted three days. Unlike traditional Thanksgivings today where people eat turkey, the pilgrims ate fish. Thanksgiving was celebrated by many people each year. It was not made an official holiday until 1863, when Abraham Lincoln said Thanksgiving would be held on the fourth Thursday in November.

Activity

1. First I will show the students a photograph titled “The First Thanksgiving 1621.” I will ask students questions about the photo to get them thinking. Some questions I may ask are:
   - What are the people doing in the photo?
   - What do you think the people are eating?
   - What different types of people do you see in this photo?
   - How do you think these people are feeling and why?
   - Compare this photo of Thanksgiving to your families traditional Thanksgiving.
   - Why do you think this feast in the photo is occurring?
   - Do you think this is an accurate representation of the first Thanksgiving and why?

2. When we are done with the discussion about the photograph, we will read together the lesson from the students’ textbook about the First Thanksgiving. Even though this is a secondary source it is a good source of information that will enhance learning.
3. Next, I will show my students a newspaper article from 1907 that is about appointing the day Thanksgiving. It is an article from the Rice Belt Journal. This article talks about Abraham Lincoln making Thanksgiving an official holiday. I will have the students compare and contrast this article with their textbook. The students will work in groups. They will tell me if they learned more from the primary source or the secondary source. They will also tell me the negative and positives of each source.

4. Then to liven up the lesson, I will play for the students a Thanksgiving Polka. This Polka was made in 1923 by Nathaniel Shilkret. I will ask the students questions when they are done listening to the song. Some questions may be:
   - What does this song remind you of?
   - What kind of mood does this song put you in?
   - Is this song something you would want to dance too?
   - How is this Polka from 1923 similar or different to modern Polkas?

After the students answer the questions, I will play the song again and the students can get up and dance.

5. Lastly, I will read the students a book titled “A Thanksgiving Sermon, Delivered at St. John’s Church, Georgetown.” This sermon is from 1865. Students will be able to hear the importance of Thanksgiving and the religious and spiritual nature of Thanksgiving. The students should think about this sermon and if it would appeal to modern day and what makes it different from what they might hear at church today.

6. To see how well the students understood the lesson, they will be given a brief quiz that will include questions from all the primary sources and the secondary source.

**Stripling’s Model of Inquiry**

I believe I used all six parts of the Stripling Model of Inquiry. The students can connect to previous knowledge when they are asked about their Thanksgiving and how it relates to the Pilgrims first Thanksgiving. The students wonder what the lesson is going to be about when they see the first photograph. Students are also wondering when they are listening to the Thanksgiving Polka. The students are asked to investigate in all activities. When they are looking at the photo, reading the newspaper
article, listening to the Thanksgiving Polka, and listening to the sermon, they are investigating. The students are constructing new knowledge when they are reading their textbook and the newspaper article. They are learning something new that they did not know prior to the lesson. The students are asked to express themselves when they are answering questions either orally or thinking about questions and answers to themselves. The sermon that the students will listen to in the end of the lesson allows the students to reflect. They can reflect back on what they learned throughout the lesson and gain more knowledge that they can pass on to others. In this lesson, I used a variety of primary sources and I also used all the learning modalities.