

Map My Ancestors

Thanksgiving provides a great opportunity to share your family's coming-to-America story with your kids. Whether your ancestors started here, came over on the Mayflower, joined the immigration boom of the early 20th century or just recently made the U.S. their home, sharing your heritage with your kids can be a special part of your Thanksgiving Day celebration and a valuable geography lesson!

What You Need:

- A world map (you can pick up inexpensive ones at poster shops)
- Round-headed straight pins in at least two different colors
- A cork board or bulletin board

What You Do:

1. This is a project the whole family can do together. Help your child tape or pin your map onto the bulletin board, and set it in the center of the table. Give each adult at the table a pile of pins in a different color.
2. Start by helping your child mark your town on the map with a pin.
3. Take turns handing your child pins to put on the map, moving backwards through the places you've lived. Tell them where you went to college or worked, where you grew up, where your parents grew up, and so on.
4. Your child may be able to identify states and countries, but if they have trouble finding a place on the map or if you want to guide them to a specific region, support them by storytelling. For example, "My grandfather was born in the mountains" and by telling them when they're getting "hotter" or "colder." You can even help by telling them to move the pin North, East, South, or West for extra practice.
5. Continue with as many relatives and friends as you can think of. Say things like "My Uncle Kenji lives in Japan. Can you find Japan?" Then your child will mark that place on the map.



As the map fills up, your child will see how much a part of the global community they are, and they will have learned a lot about you! You can even invite your Thanksgiving guests to add their own relatives to your heritage map with different colored pins to add to your global family.