

PLYMOUTH COLONY

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In September 1620, during the reign of King James I, around 100 English men and women—many of them members of the English Separatist Church—set sail for the New World aboard the Mayflower, a three-masted merchant ship. They landed on the shores of Cape Cod, in present-day Massachusetts, two months later, and in late December anchored at Plymouth Rock, where they would form the first permanent settlement of Europeans in New England. Though more than half the original settlers died during that grueling first winter, the survivors were able to secure peace treaties with neighboring Native American tribes and build a largely self-sufficient economy within five years.

JOURNEY TO THE NEW WORLD

Among the group traveling on the Mayflower in 1620 were close to 40 members of a radical Puritan faction known as the English Separatist Church. Feeling that the Church of England had not sufficiently completed the necessary work of the Protestant Reformation, the group had chosen to break with the church altogether. The Separatists had sought religious freedom before, fleeing England in 1607 and 1608 to settle in the Netherlands, first in Amsterdam and later in the town of Leiden, where they remained for the next decade. Wanting to secure their English language and heritage, and seeking more economic opportunity, the group—later known as the Pilgrims—laid plans for a voyage to the New World aboard the Mayflower.

Did You Know?

Three more ships traveled to Plymouth soon after the Mayflower, including the Fortune (1621), the Anne and the Little James (both 1623). Passengers on these first four ships were called the "Old Comers" of Plymouth Colony, and were given special treatment in later colonial affairs.

Rough seas and storms prevented the ship from reaching its initial destination—a region near the Hudson River—and after 66 days it reached the shores of Cape Cod, anchoring at the site of Provincetown on November 21. An exploratory party was sent ashore, and on December 18 the ship docked at Plymouth Rock, on the western side of Cape Cod Bay. The explorer John Smith had named the area Plymouth, and the settlers decided the name was appropriate, as the Mayflower had set sail from the port of Plymouth in England.

SURVIVING THE FIRST YEAR IN PLYMOUTH COLONY

For the next few months, many of the settlers stayed on the Mayflower while ferrying back and forth to shore to build their new settlement. In March, they began moving ashore permanently. More than half the settlers fell ill and died that first winter, victims of an epidemic of disease that swept the new colony. Soon after they moved ashore, the Pilgrims were introduced to a Native American man named Tisquantum, or Squanto, who would become a member of the colony. A member of the Pawtuxet tribe (from present-day Massachusetts and Rhode Island) who had been kidnapped by the explorer John Smith and taken to England, only to escape back to his native land, Squanto acted as an interpreter and mediator between Plymouth's leaders and local Native Americans, including Chief Massasoit of the Pokanoket tribe. In the fall of 1621, the Pilgrims famously shared a harvest feast with the Pokanokets; the meal is now considered the basis for the Thanksgiving holiday.

All the adult males aboard the Mayflower had signed the so-called Mayflower Compact, a document that would become the foundation of Plymouth's government. Though the Separatists were a minority in the group, they formed its powerful center, and would entirely control the colony's government during its first 40 years. William Bradford, a leader of the Separatist congregation, was one of the framers of the Mayflower Compact, and would serve as Plymouth's governor for 30 years after its founding. Bradford also kept a voluminous journal chronicling the ship's voyage and the founding of Plymouth Colony.

GROWTH AND DECLINE OF THE PLYMOUTH COLONY

With peace secured, the colonists in Plymouth were able to concentrate on building a viable settlement for themselves rather than spend their time and resources guarding themselves against attack. Squanto taught them how to plant corn, which became an important crop, as well as where to fish and hunt beaver. Though Plymouth would never develop as robust an economy as later settlements—such as Massachusetts Bay Colony—agriculture, fishing and trading made the colony self-sufficient within five years after it was founded.

Many other European settlers followed in the Pilgrims' footsteps to New England. As the settlers sought to occupy more and more land in the region, relations with Native Americans deteriorated, and sporadic violence broke out that would culminate decades later in the bloody King Philip's War of 1675. By that time, the ideal of Plymouth Colony—conceived in the Mayflower Compact as a self-contained community governed by a

common religious affiliation—had given way to the far less lofty influences of trade and commerce, and the devout Pilgrims had fragmented into smaller, more self-serving groups. Still, the original concept served as the foundation for many later settlements. These included John Winthrop’s Massachusetts Bay Colony, founded in 1630, which became the most populous and prosperous colony in the region. Plymouth’s influence in New England declined accordingly, until it was absorbed by Massachusetts in 1691.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What was the Mayflower?

- A** a ship that reached Plymouth in 1623, shortly after the Anne arrived
- B** a ship that carried around 100 English men and women to Cape Cod in 1620
- C** a ship that took a Native American man known as Squanto from North America to England
- D** a ship that carried John Winthrop to the New World, where he founded Massachusetts Bay Colony

2. The article explains why some of the people aboard the Mayflower wanted to travel to the New World. What is one of the reasons that some of the people aboard the Mayflower wanted to travel to the New World?

- A** They wanted more economic opportunity.
- B** They wanted to rejoin the Church of England.
- C** They wanted to bring English customs to the Netherlands.
- D** They wanted to increase trade between England and the Netherlands.

3. Squanto's help was important to the colonists' survival in Plymouth.

What evidence from the text best supports this conclusion?

- A** "Soon after they moved ashore, the Pilgrims were introduced to a Native American man named Tisquantum, or Squanto, who would become a member of the colony."
- B** "A member of the Pawtuxet tribe (from present-day Massachusetts and Rhode Island) who had been kidnapped by the explorer John Smith and taken to England, only to escape back to his native land, Squanto acted as an interpreter and mediator between Plymouth's leaders and local Native Americans, including Chief Massasoit of the Pokanoket tribe."
- C** "In the fall of 1621, the Pilgrims famously shared a harvest feast with the Pokanokets; the meal is now considered the basis for the Thanksgiving holiday."
- D** "Squanto taught them how to plant corn, which became an important crop, as well as where to fish and hunt beaver. Though Plymouth would never develop as robust an economy as later settlements—such as Massachusetts Bay Colony—agriculture, fishing and trading made the colony self-sufficient within five years after it was founded."

4. Read these sentences from the text.

“Many other European settlers followed in the Pilgrims’ footsteps to New England. As the settlers sought to occupy more and more land in the region, relations with Native Americans deteriorated, and sporadic violence broke out that would culminate decades later in the bloody King Philip’s War of 1675.”

Based on the information in these sentences, why might relations between European settlers and Native Americans have deteriorated?

- A** The winter of 1675 was unusually harsh and resulted in a scarcity of food throughout New England.
- B** The policies of King Philip were less friendly to Native Americans than the policies of King James I.
- C** Native Americans became upset by European settlers taking over more and more land.
- D** Communication between European settlers and Native Americans became more difficult after Squanto's death.

5. What is the main idea of this article?

- A** Members of the English Separatist Church broke with the Church of England because they felt that it had not sufficiently completed the work of the Protestant Reformation.
- B** The original destination of the Mayflower was a region near the Hudson River, but rough weather resulted in the ship landing on the shores of Cape Cod instead.
- C** The Separatists formed the powerful center of the group on the Mayflower and would control the government of Plymouth Colony for its first 40 years.
- D** Plymouth Colony, founded in 1620 by a group of English men and women, was the first permanent settlement of Europeans in New England.

6. Read this sentence from the text.

“Though Plymouth would never develop as robust an economy as later settlements—such as Massachusetts Bay Colony—agriculture, fishing and trading made the colony self-sufficient within five years after it was founded.”

Why might the author have used em dashes in this sentence?

- A** to provide an example of one of the "later settlements"
- B** to suggest that later settlements would take more than five years to become self-sufficient
- C** to express surprise that Plymouth Colony's economy was not more robust
- D** to emphasize the importance of agriculture in Plymouth Colony

7. Read this sentence from the text.

“With peace secured, the colonists in Plymouth were able to concentrate on building a viable settlement for themselves rather than spend their time and resources guarding themselves against attack.”

What phrase could replace "With peace secured" without changing the meaning of the sentence?

- A Before peace had been secured
- B Until peace had been secured
- C Although peace had been secured
- D Because peace had been secured

8. By 1675 the ideal of Plymouth Colony as a community governed by a common religious affiliation had given way to the influences of trade and commerce. What had happened to the Pilgrims by this time?

9. One important accomplishment of the settlers of Plymouth Colony was to secure peace treaties with neighboring Native American tribes. What was another of their important accomplishments?

10. Explain how Plymouth Colony may have served as a foundation for later settlements. Support your answer with evidence from the article.

Question related to the text and the video, *Pilgrims in America*:

11. A) What are the reasons given in the video for the Pilgrims coming to New England?
B) Compare and contrast these reasons with those given in the article.
