

They Sailed on the Mayflower and Struggled to Build a Home: the Pilgrims

By History.com, adapted by Newsela staff on 11.22.16

Word Count **639**

Level **680L**



TOP: "Landing of the Pilgrims" by Michele Felice Cornè, circa 1805. Displayed in the White House. Courtesy of The White House Historical Association. BOTTOM: Squanto, also known as Tisquantum, teaching the Plymouth colonists to plant corn using fish as fertilizer. Drawing from the public domain.

In 1620, about 100 people set sail on the Mayflower ship. They traveled from England to the New World, also called the Americas. Many of them were looking for the freedom to practice their religion. The Mayflower arrived at Cape Cod, which now is part of Massachusetts. Scouts were sent out. Then, the Mayflower sailed to nearby Plymouth Harbor. The settlers founded Plymouth Colony. It was the first real European settlement in New England. Earlier, settlers had landed in Jamestown, Virginia. But these settlers were a different group. The settlers of New England came to be known as Pilgrims.

Puritans set sail on the Mayflower

The group on the Mayflower included 35 people from the England Separatist Church. This was a Puritan group that broke away from the Church of England. They wanted to practice their own religion. The Separatists thought it would be easier to do this in the New World. In 1620, they finally set sail on the Mayflower.

One of the people on the ship was Myles Standish. He would become the military leader of the new colony. Another was William Bradford, who wrote about the Mayflower voyage. While still on the ship, a group of men signed a document called the Mayflower Compact. It made rules for how they would live together in the New World. The Compact was the beginning of the new colony's government.

Settlers suffer through harsh winter

The Mayflower sailed for 65 days. Finally it landed on the shores of Cape Cod, where the settlers founded Plymouth Colony.



During the first winter, many people suffered from the cold and poor nutrition. More than half of the English settlers died. Leaders such as Bradford and Standish fought to keep the remaining settlers together. John Carver was chosen to be the settlement's first governor. After he died, Bradford became the governor. He served as the settlers' leader for many years.

Squanto teaches the Pilgrims

The native people of the area around Plymouth Colony were the Wampanoag Indians. They had lived there for about 10,000 years before the Europeans arrived. Soon after the Pilgrims built their settlement, they met Squanto. He was a Native American who spoke English. Europeans had captured him a few years earlier. Somehow he escaped, and he returned to his native land to find that most of his tribe had died of disease.

Squanto helped the Pilgrims speak with the Native American chiefs. He also taught them how to plant corn, fish and hunt. In the fall of 1621, the Pilgrims shared a harvest feast with the Pokanoket Indians. The meal is considered the first Thanksgiving.

Pilgrims fight with local tribes



Other tribes did not get along as well with the European settlers. They became especially angry as the settlers took away more and more of their land. Bradford feared that New England would soon be torn apart by fighting. In 1675, his predictions came true. The Native Americans and the European settlers fought each other in King Philip's War. About 5,000 people died. More than half of them were Native Americans.

More Pilgrims come from England

In England, the government punished people who wanted to practice their own religion. This drove more men and women to come to the New World. In 1630, a group of some 1,000 people settled in Massachusetts. They founded the Massachusetts Bay Colony. It would become the largest and most successful colony in the area.

The original settlers were less successful. After the early 1630s, some of their leaders left the group to found their own communities. Soon the King of England sent a governor to rule over New England. Plymouth eventually became part of the colony of Massachusetts.

Over time, Americans began to call the original settlers "the Pilgrim Fathers" or just "the Pilgrims." Their story is always told at Thanksgiving.

Quiz

- 1 Which of the following answer choices BEST describes the structure of the first paragraph of the section "Puritans set sail on the Mayflower"?

The group on the Mayflower included 35 people from the England Separatist Church. This was a Puritan group that broke away from the Church of England. They wanted to practice their own religion. The Separatists thought it would be easier to do this in the New World. In 1620, they finally set sail on the Mayflower.

- (A) compare and contrast
- (B) cause and effect
- (C) chronological order
- (D) order of importance
- 2 What is the purpose of the section "More Pilgrims come from England"?
- (A) to describe the Pilgrims' religious practices
- (B) to describe what the King of England was like
- (C) to explain the different reasons some leaders left the group
- (D) to explain what happened to the original settlers later
- 3 Based on the article, what do we know about the area marked Pokanoket on the map?
- (A) It was the location that the Pilgrims sailed away from to found Plymouth Colony.
- (B) It was the home of other tribes that did not get along with the European settlers.
- (C) It was the location where earlier settlers landed in Jamestown, Virginia.
- (D) It was the home of the Indians who shared the first Thanksgiving with the Pilgrims.
- 4 Based on the article, what do we know about what is happening in the image of Squanto?
- (A) Squanto was helping the Pilgrims build their settlement.
- (B) Squanto was showing Pilgrims a better way to grow corn.
- (C) Squanto could not speak any English.
- (D) Squanto lived in Plymouth Colony his entire life.