

from Of Plymouth Plantation

Based on the historical narrative by
William Bradford



This adaptation of the historical narrative includes targeted passages from the text for you to read on your own.

BACKGROUND

Plymouth Plantation was a community formed by English settlers who landed on Cape Cod—now part of Massachusetts—in 1620. William Bradford helped organize the journey on a ship called the *Mayflower*. About half of the people on the ship, including Bradford, were Puritans, a group that wanted to make the Church of England “pure,” or morally perfect. The *Mayflower* was sailing for Virginia, but storms blew it off course. Bradford’s historical narrative describes the settlers’ journey, their new life in Plymouth, and the difficulties they have in creating a new home.

NOTES

ADAPTATION

The Second Book

I will keep the next part of this history short by noting only the major events in time order, and only those things that may be useful to know. And I will call it the Second Book.

Chapter XI

The Rest of the Year 1620

[The Mayflower Compact]

I will begin by describing a compact, or agreement, made by the people on the *Mayflower* before they came ashore. It was the beginning of their government in this place. One reason for the compact was the speeches regarding mutiny or rebellion made by some people on the ship who were not Puritans. They said that when they came ashore, they would be free, for no one had the power to command them. They said they had a **patent** to settle in Virginia, not in New England. It was hoped that if they agreed to the compact, it might hold them as strongly as any patent, and in some ways more strongly.

patent: permission from a government to settle on a certain piece of land

The form of the compact was as follows:

In the Name of God, Amen.

We whose names are written below are the loyal subjects of King James of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, Defender of the Faith.

We have promised, for the glory of God and the honor of our king and country, a voyage to settle the first colony in the northern parts of Virginia. For this reason, we make this compact seriously and join ourselves together into a community of laws. We will create and uphold fair and equal laws, constitutions, and **offices**, whenever they are needed to promote the general good of the colony. We promise to obey the laws of this colony. In witness to this compact, we have signed our names at Cape Cod, the 11th of November, in the year 1620.

offices: positions or jobs in a government

 **Reading Check**

What did the people who signed the Mayflower Compact promise to do?

Read this passage from the selection to learn what the people did after signing the Mayflower Compact.

TARGETED PASSAGE

5 After this they chose, or rather confirmed, Mr. John Carver (a man godly and well approved amongst them) their Governor for that year. And after they had provided a place for their goods, or common store (which **were long in unlading** for **want of** boats, foulness of the winter weather and sickness of **divers**) and begun some small cottages for their habitation; as time would **admit**, they met and consulted of laws and orders, both for their civil and military government as the necessity of their condition did require, still adding thereunto as urgent occasion in several times, and as cases did require.

were long in unlading: took a long time to unload

want of: lack of; need of

divers: several people

admit: allow

 **Reading Check**

How did the people follow the Mayflower Compact as they set up their community?

ADAPTATION (continued)

In these hard and difficult beginnings, some people were unhappy and complained, while others made mutinous speeches. However, these problems were soon solved by the Governor and most of the other people working together faithfully using wisdom, patience, and justice.

[The Starving Time]

Sadly, in two or three months, half of the people died, especially in January and February. It was the middle of winter, and people did not have good houses and other comforts. Many were infected with the scurvy, or a disease caused by a lack of vitamin C, and other diseases. Sometimes two or three people died in one day so that only about 50 people survived. During the worst time, there were only six or seven healthy people who, with hard work and risk to their health, gathered wood for the sick, made their fires, prepared their meat, made their beds, washed their dirty clothes, and helped them get dressed. They did all the homely and necessary work that would disgust most people, and they did it willingly and cheerfully, showing a true love of their friends and family members. It is a rare example that people should remember. Two of the seven people were Mr. William Brewster and Myles Standish, who greatly helped many others and me in our low and sick condition. And yet the Lord protected these persons so that they did not become sick or lame. ...

[Indian Relations]

During this time, the Indians, or Native Americans, watched the settlers but stayed hidden. They would sometimes show themselves from far away, but when anyone got near them, they would run away. Once, the Indians stole the settlers' tools while the settlers were having dinner. However, around the 16th of March, a certain Indian came boldly among the settlers and spoke to them in English. He was not from the Plymouth area but lived to the east, where some English ships came to fish. He could name some of the men from these ships who taught him English.

This Indian helped the settlers by teaching them about the eastern area where he lived. He told them about the land and about the people who lived there. His name was Samoset. He told them also of another Indian whose name was Squanto, a native of the Plymouth area who had been in England and could speak better English than himself.

The settlers entertained Samoset and gave him gifts. Later, he came again with five more Indians, and they brought back all the tools that had been stolen. They prepared for the coming of their great Sachem, or leader called Massasoit. About four or five days later, Massasoit came with a group of other Indians, including Squanto. The settlers provided friendly entertainment and gifts, then made a peace with him that has now lasted for 24 years. The terms of the peace were as follows:

**Reading Check**

Why was the first winter in Plymouth called “the starving time”?

**Reading Check**

How did Samoset help the settlers?

1. Neither Massasoit nor any of his people would injure or hurt any of the settlers.
2. If one of Massasoit's people did hurt the settlers, Massasoit would send that person to the settlers for punishment.
3. If any Indians stole from the settlers or any settlers stole from the Indians, the items would be returned.
4. If Massasoit or the settlers were attacked unjustly by someone else, they would help each other.
5. Massasoit would inform other Indian groups of the peace treaty so that they would also be friendly to the settlers.
6. When Massasoit's men came to visit the settlers, they would not bring their bows and arrows.

Read this passage from the selection to learn how Squanto helped the settlers.

TARGETED PASSAGE

10 After these things he returned to his place called Sowams, some 40 miles from this place, but Squanto continued with them and was their interpreter and was a **special instrument** sent of God for their good beyond their expectation. He directed them how to **set** their corn, where to **take** fish, and to procure other **commodities**, and was also their **pilot** to bring them to unknown places for their profit, and never left them till he died. He was a native of this place, and scarce any left alive besides himself. . . .

special instrument: a helpful person; a gift

set: plant

take: catch

commodities: useful things

pilot: a guide

Reading Check

How did Squanto help the settlers survive in their new home?

ADAPTATION (continued)

Earlier in Squanto's life, he and several other Indians were captured to be sold as slaves in Spain. But Squanto escaped to England and made friends with a merchant trader in London who bought and sold things for a profit. He later worked in Newfoundland and other places, and he was finally brought to Plymouth by a man named Dermer who had been hired to explore the area....

[First Thanksgiving]

The next year, the settlers began to gather their small harvest and to get their houses ready for winter. They were all healthy and strong, and they had plenty of everything. Some settlers were employed in fishing. They caught a large amount of cod, bass, and other fish, of which every family had their share. All summer they had everything they needed.

As winter approached, there were plenty of **fowl**. The Plymouth area had lots of fowl when the settlers first came, although the numbers decreased over time. Besides waterfowl, there were large numbers of wild turkeys, of which the settlers took many, along with **venison** and the meat of other animals. Each settler also had about a 8 quarts of meal or corn each week. Many settlers wrote to their friends in England about how much food they had in Plymouth, and these were true reports.

fowl: bird hunted for food

venison: the meat of a deer

**Reading Check**

In what ways did the first Thanksgiving differ from the Pilgrims' early days in Plymouth?

**TURN & TALK**

It took courage, cooperation, and lots of help from nearby Native Americans for the settlers to survive in Plymouth. Consider how people in your community cooperate with each other when there is a problem or people need support. What other types of help would it be good to give or receive within your community? Discuss your thoughts with a partner or small group.

