

Name: _____

Colonial America

The Mayflower



Directions: Read the following passage then answer the questions.

The Great Voyage of the Mayflower

Imagine this: the year is 1620, and you're about to step onto a creaky, wooden ship with 101 other people. You're about to set off on a journey across a vast, stormy ocean, not knowing if you'll even make it to the other side. That's what the Pilgrims did. They were eager for a fresh start and wanted religious freedom. They packed up all their belongings and set sail on a ship named the Mayflower.

Why Leave England?

Life in England wasn't easy for the Pilgrims. They felt that the King's church wasn't for them. They wanted to separate from the Church of England and worship in their own way. But the King wanted everyone to worship in his church. He persecuted them. The Pilgrims faced fines, prison, or worse!

So, they left England and tried living in Holland. It was better for them, but they felt that the other people living in Holland were immoral. They were afraid of how this would affect their children. They wanted to go where they could truly be themselves. They whispered tales of a vast land across the sea - America. This was their chance!

A Rough Start

The Mayflower wasn't a cruise liner with fancy meals. The journey was nothing like a vacation. It was cramped, and life onboard was tough. The journey took 66 days. There were fierce storms, howling winds, seasickness, and lots of waiting. But the Pilgrims held on to their hopes and dreams.

When the shout "Land!" finally echoed across the ship, they felt relief and excitement. But there was a little problem. Instead of sunny Virginia, they had arrived in chilly Massachusetts. The cold winter was setting in. But, being as resourceful as they were, they decided to make the best of it.

A New Beginning

Before they even stepped foot on land, they wrote the Mayflower Compact. This was an agreement on how they would live together. It included rules on how they would help one another and govern their new community. It was one of the first attempts at self-government in the New World.

The Pilgrims began building their settlement, which they named Plymouth. The land was unfamiliar, the weather was chilly, and they didn't know which plants were safe to eat or where to fish. Those early days were tough. They worked hard building homes, learning about the land, and trying to stay warm and fed.

Friends in Unfamiliar Places

But good fortune was on their side. They met the Native Americans from the Wampanoag tribe. A man named Squanto became their ally. He showed them the best fishing spots, taught them how to plant corn, and shared the secrets of the land. With his help, they learned to thrive in their new home. They didn't have an easy start, but they were determined. With a little help from their new friends, the Pilgrims made Plymouth a key chapter in the story of America.

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Reading Questions

1. How did the King persecute the Pilgrims and why did he do this? _____

2. Why did the Pilgrims leave Holland? _____

3. How did the author portray the Pilgrims' journey on the Mayflower? _____

4. What does the decision to stay in Massachusetts show about the pilgrims? _____

5. Why do you believe this?

6. Why did the Pilgrims write the Mayflower Compact before leaving the ship? _____

7. What challenges did the Pilgrims face in their early days at Plymouth? _____

8. How did the Wampanoag tribe, especially Squanto, affect the Pilgrims' chances of survival?

9. Why do you believe this?

10. How might things have been different if the Pilgrims landed in Virginia as they had planned?
