

1636 Harvard College is founded
 1647 Massachusetts passes the first public school law

Life in New England

WHAT TO KNOW
 How did the Puritans' religious beliefs affect life and government in the New England Colonies?

VOCABULARY

common p. 210
town meeting p. 210

PLACES

Harvard College

Focus Skill SUMMARIZE

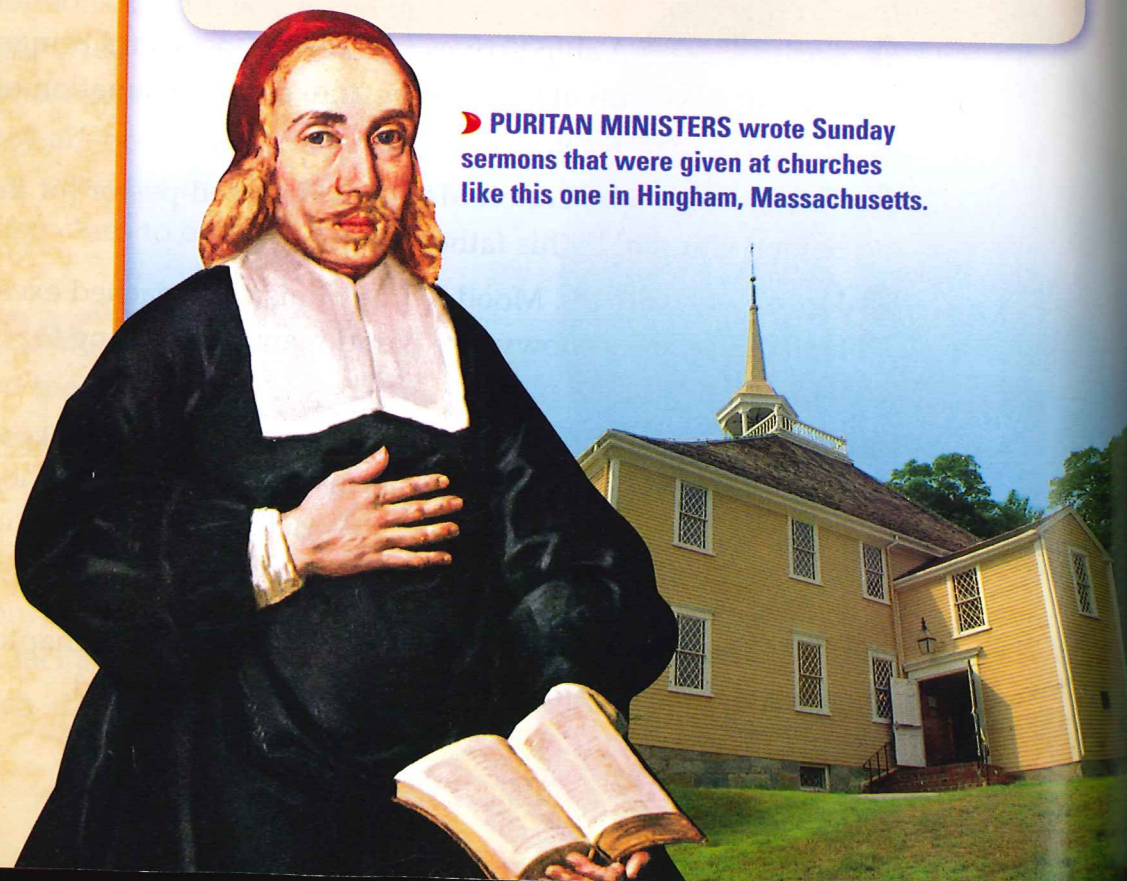
Key Facts Summary

YOU ARE THERE

You sit beside your mother on a hard wooden bench in church. Across the aisle, your father and the other Puritan men and boys listen to the minister's sermon. It has already lasted three hours!

You try hard to stay awake. If someone catches you napping, you know that you will be punished. You wish the leaders of your town were not so strict about how people must act in church.

PURITAN MINISTERS wrote Sunday sermons that were given at churches like this one in Hingham, Massachusetts.



NEW ENGLAND COLONISTS Colonists in New England often carried their weapons with them wherever they went, including church.

A Religious Life

The Puritans lived their lives based on their religious beliefs. Before making any decision, they thought about the Bible's laws. They also thought about how God and their community might judge them. Their religious beliefs told them how to live, work, and spend their free time.

Church Services

On Sundays, everyone in town had to attend church. Puritan churches had no paintings, statues, or bells. The Puritans believed in simple religious practice. They thought that reading the Bible and praying were the best ways to worship.

A Puritan church service lasted most of the day, with a break for a meal at noon.

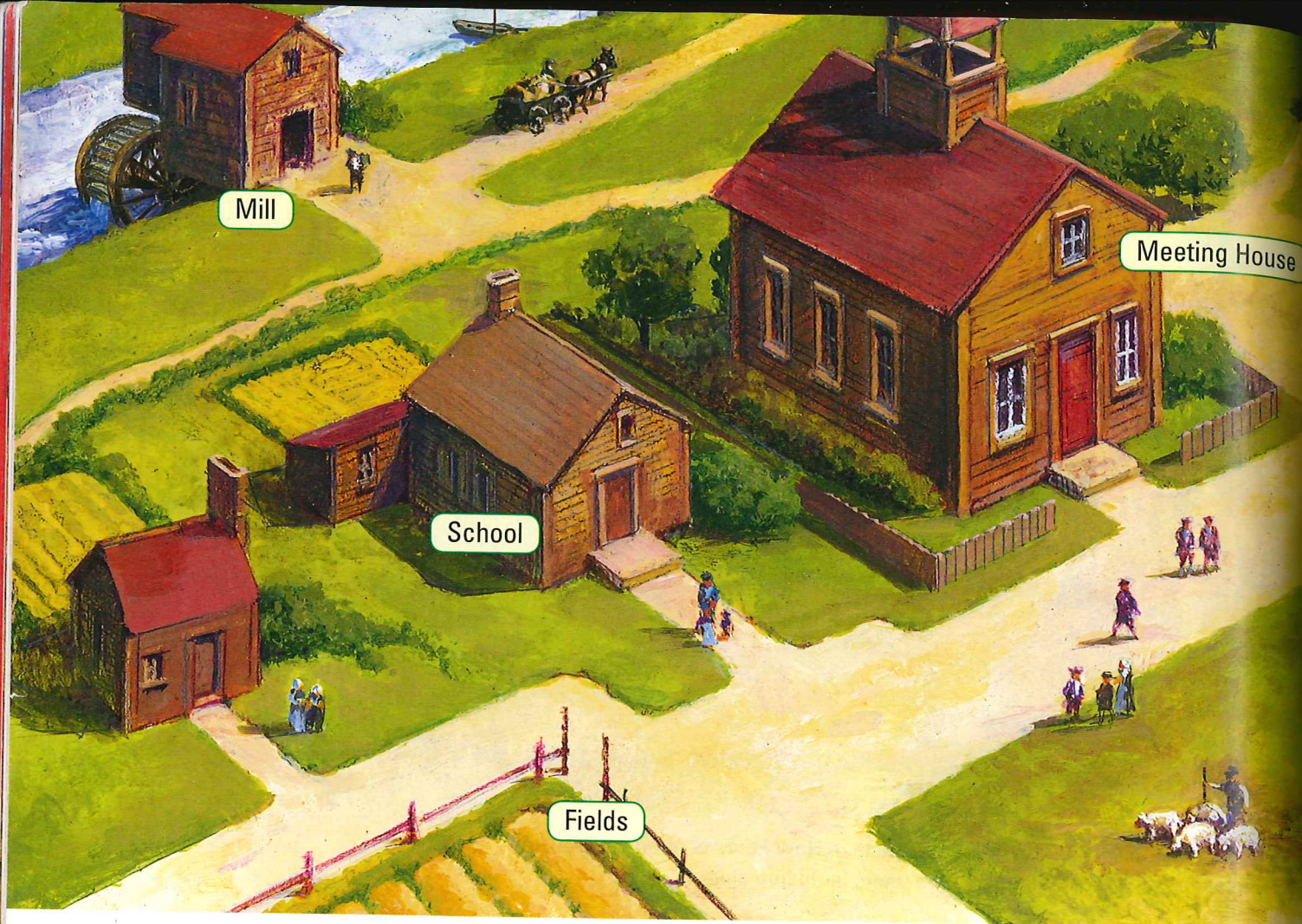
People sat on hard wooden benches and could not nap. A person who fell asleep or did not behave was punished harshly.

The Puritans also punished people who missed church or spoke out in dissent. A common punishment was several hours in the town stocks. In the stocks, a person's head, hands, and feet were locked into a wooden frame.

The Puritans lived by strict rules. They did not like stage plays or card games. They believed such activities wasted time. Instead, the Puritans found ways to combine their free time and their work in activities such as fishing and quilt-making.

READING CHECK **SUMMARIZE**

How did the religious beliefs of the Puritans affect their daily lives?



Everyday Life

Most people in colonial New England lived in small towns. They lived, worked, and worshipped close together.

At the center of each town was the **common**. This grassy area was shared by the town's people. It was used for grazing sheep, cattle, and other livestock.

The colonists built their homes and other buildings around the common. Nearly all towns also had a school. Most had a general store, a sawmill, and a blacksmith's shop.

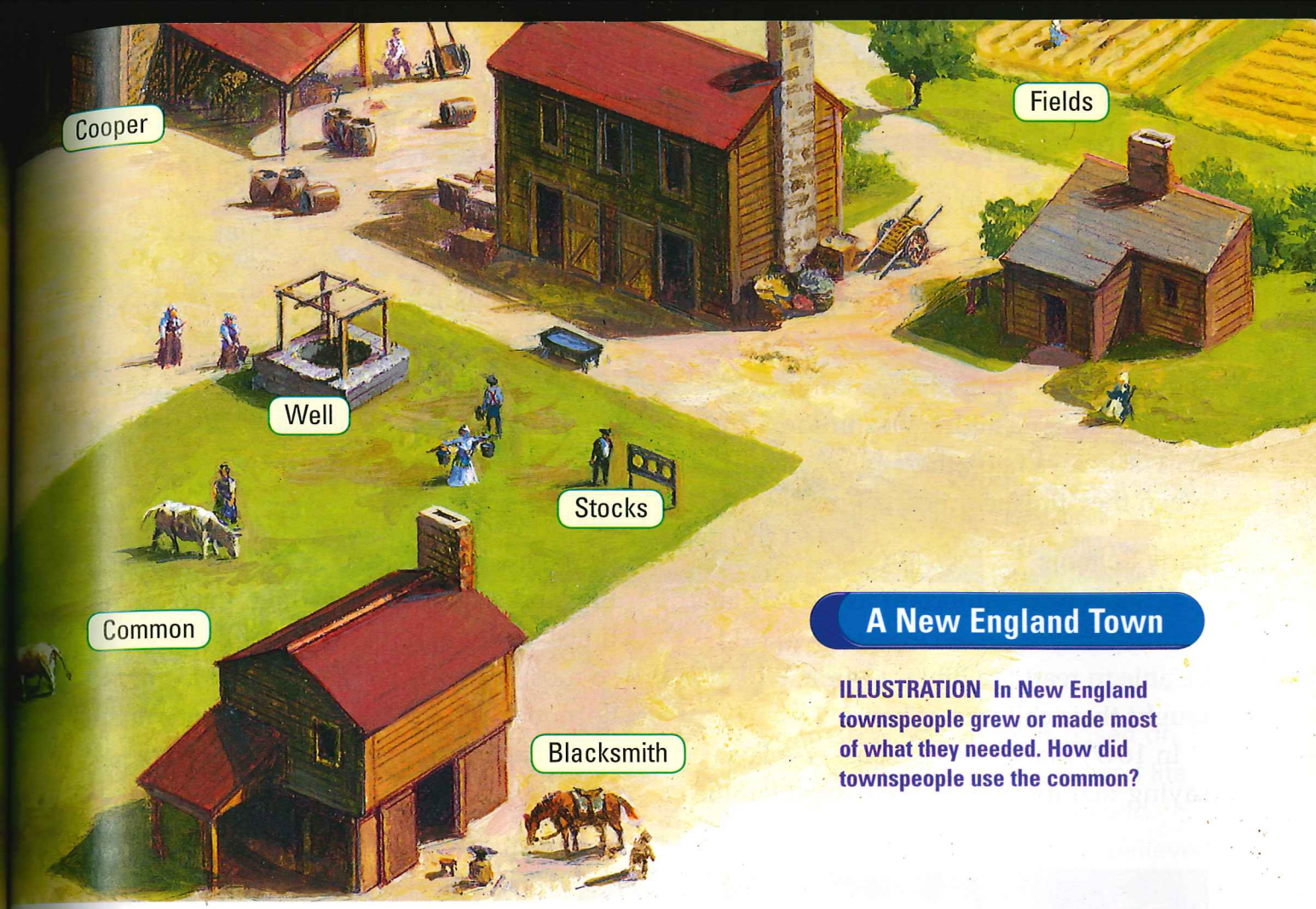
To meet their economic needs, people used a barter system. Instead of using money, people traded with each other.

A blacksmith might make iron tools for the cooper. In turn, the cooper might make barrels for the blacksmith.

The Town Meeting

The meetinghouse, or town church, was a town's most important building. At least once a year, the townspeople gathered there for a **town meeting**. At town meetings, people voted on laws and elected leaders. Anyone could attend, but only free white men who owned property could vote.

Each year, colonists in Massachusetts voted for who would represent them at the General Court, the colony's legislature. The General Court made laws for the whole colony. In 1641, the General



A New England Town

ILLUSTRATION In New England townspeople grew or made most of what they needed. How did townspeople use the common?

Court passed the Massachusetts Body of Liberties. This set of laws listed the rights of all free colonists.

A Puritan Home

The main room of a Puritan home had a large fireplace, where a fire was always burning. All cooking was done there. Most food was roasted over the fire or warmed in large iron kettles. Baking was done in a small oven inside the fireplace.

Women and girls spent hours preparing food. They churned cream to turn it into butter. They dried fruits and vegetables and stored them in jars. This extra food helped feed families during winter.

Women also made other things for their families. They spun thread and made the colonists' clothing. They used animal fat

to make soap and candles. They used pig hair to make brushes.

Men and boys spent their days working in the fields and hunting. They cut firewood and made their own tools. They raised cattle for food and leather and sheep for wool. The men also guarded the town.

Every fall, all the colonists helped harvest the crops. They kept part of the crops for themselves and sent some to England to trade for goods such as paper, lead, and paint. They also sent some of the crops to the English colonies in the Caribbean islands to trade for sugar.

READING CHECK SUMMARIZE

How did New England colonists participate in their government?

Childhood in New England

Life was hard for the early Puritans, but children still found time to relax. They had few toys, but they liked playing games and sports. Most families had more than five children, so brothers and sisters always had others to play with when they finished their chores.

Early Schools

Schools were important to the Puritans because they believed everyone should be able to read the Bible. At first, parents taught their children at home.

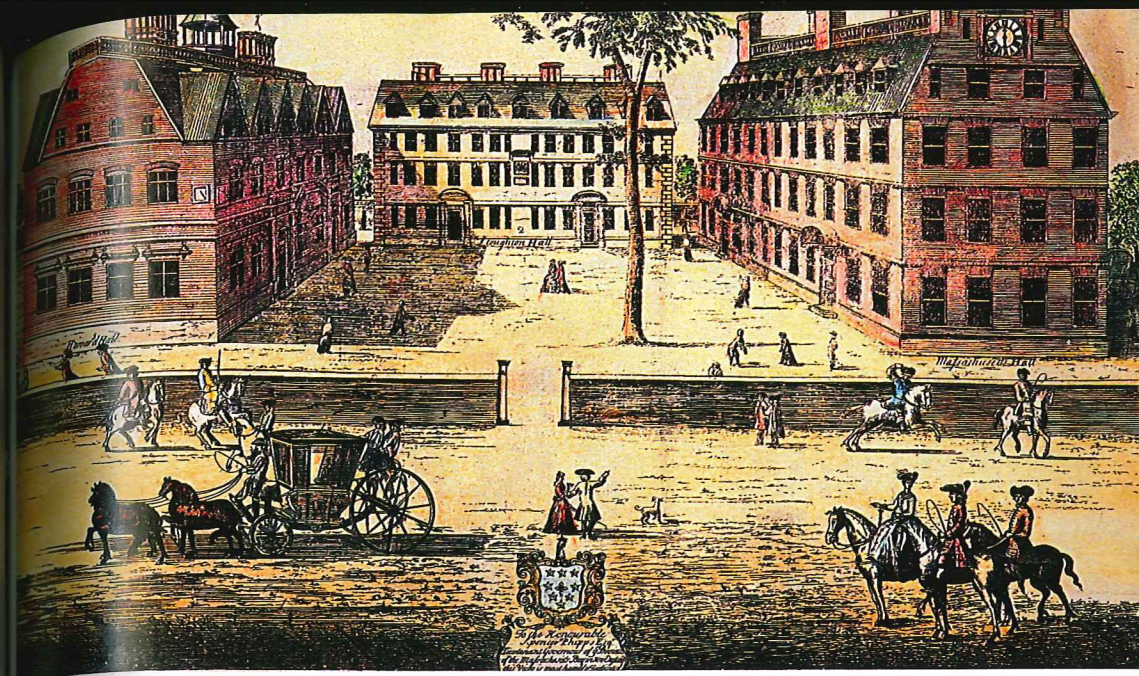
In 1647, Massachusetts passed a law saying that towns with at least 50 families

must have a school. All the other New England Colonies except Rhode Island passed similar laws. As a result, the New England Colonies had more schools than any of the other English colonies.

A typical New England school had one room and one teacher. Most teachers were men, and many were very strict. Some often whipped students for bad behavior or even for a wrong answer!

Learning to Read

The main subject taught in New England schools was reading. In colonial times, paper and ink were very costly, so most students learned to read from a hornbook. This was a piece of paper that was attached to a paddle-shaped frame and that showed the alphabet.



HARVARD COLLEGE
This engraving shows Harvard as it would have looked in 1725, nearly 100 years after it was founded.

Children did not go to school for long. They were needed to work at home. However, some boys continued their education and attended college. In 1636, the Puritans founded **Harvard College**, now Harvard University, to train ministers.

READING CHECK **SUMMARIZE**

Why was education important to the Puritans?

Summary

The Puritan way of life was based on religion. Religious beliefs influenced life and government in the New England Colonies. New England colonists believed everyone should be able to read, so most towns had schools.

Primary Sources

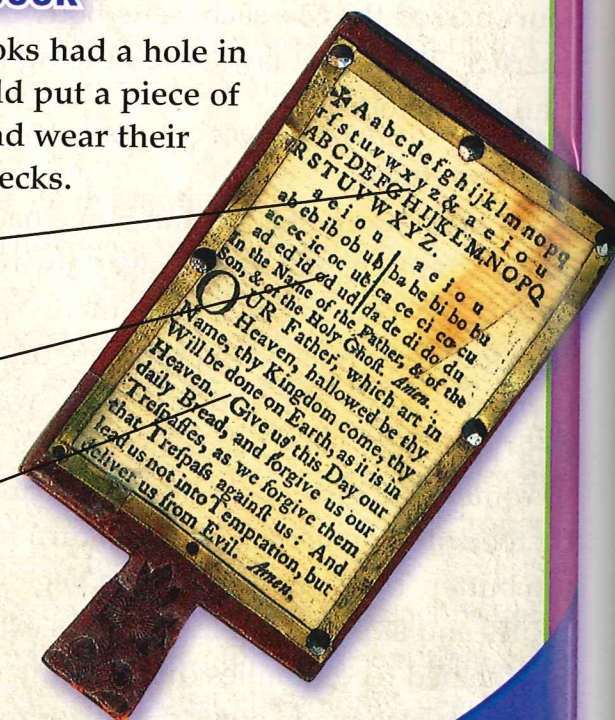
A Hornbook

Background Many hornbooks had a hole in the handle. Students would put a piece of string through the hole and wear their hornbooks around their necks.

The alphabet is shown in lowercase and capital letters.

The next section has vowels and consonants.

A prayer completes the page.



DBQ Document-Based Question What does this hornbook tell you about schools in colonial New England?

REVIEW

- WHAT TO KNOW** How did the Puritans' religious beliefs affect life and government in the New England Colonies?
- VOCABULARY** Write a sentence telling what a **town meeting** might have been like.
- HISTORY** In what ways did New England colonists practice self-government?
- CRITICAL THINKING Make It Relevant** How was an early New England town like your own? How was it different?

- WRITE A NARRATIVE** Write a story about school in the New England Colonies. Your story should tell what school was like, the materials students used, and how teachers taught.

- FOCUS SKILL SUMMARIZE** On a separate sheet of paper, copy and complete this graphic organizer.

Key Facts

Summary

New England colonists believed education was important.