

The Pilgrims - A Group of People Seeking Religious Freedom & Wealth

The Pilgrims' Journey

John Smith left Jamestown and in 1614 explored north along the Atlantic coast. He made a map of the northern area he visited. He also named the region New England and wrote a book called *A Description of New England*. Today, the region includes six states—Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine.

Seeking Religious Freedom

Many people in England read Smith's book. It made them think about building new communities in the region he described. Some people wanted to move there to make money. Others wanted to move there for religious reasons.

Years earlier, King Henry VIII had banned the Catholic Church in England and replaced it with the Church of England. Everyone in England had to belong to the Church of England, and those who chose not to were punished.

Hoping to follow their own religious beliefs, one group of English people had moved to the Netherlands. They came to be known as Pilgrims. A **pilgrim** is a person who makes a journey for religious reasons.

The Pilgrims had religious freedom in the Netherlands, but they did not like the Dutch way of life. They wanted to build a society where everyone shared the same religious beliefs. In North America, they would get their chance.

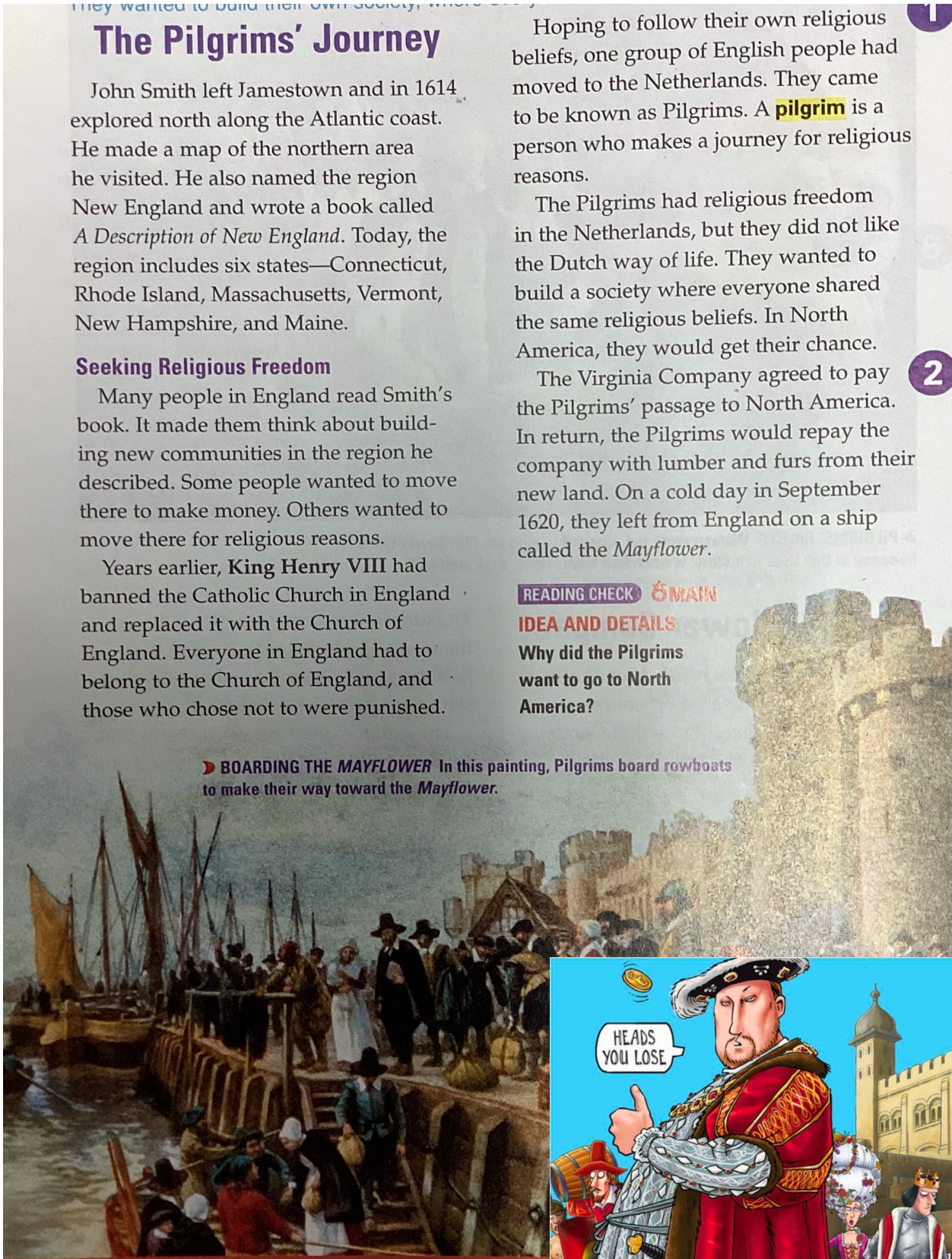
The Virginia Company agreed to pay the Pilgrims' passage to North America. In return, the Pilgrims would repay the company with lumber and furs from their new land. On a cold day in September 1620, they left from England on a ship called the *Mayflower*.

READING CHECK **MAIN**

IDEA AND DETAILS

Why did the Pilgrims want to go to North America?

► **BOARDING THE MAYFLOWER** In this painting, Pilgrims board rowboats to make their way toward the *Mayflower*.





► **PILGRIMS' RIGHTS** Women were not allowed to sign the Mayflower Compact because at this time in history, women had fewer rights than men had.

The Mayflower Compact

The *Mayflower* was headed for Virginia, but storms blew the ship off course. Instead, the *Mayflower* landed at Cape Cod, in what is now Massachusetts.

Self-Government

3 The settlers arrived in a place with no government. To keep order, all the men aboard the *Mayflower* signed a **compact**, or agreement. This document became known as the Mayflower Compact. The signers agreed that fair laws would be made for the good of the colony. They promised to obey these laws.

The Mayflower Compact gave those who signed it the right to govern themselves. At a time when monarchs ruled, **self-government** was a very new idea.

The Mayflower Compact also included the idea of **majority rule**. If more than half the people agreed to a law or a decision, everyone had to follow it.

The settlers took several weeks to find a place for their colony. They chose a site on a harbor. Fresh water and good land for growing crops were nearby. John Smith had named the place **Plymouth**.

William Bradford, one of Plymouth's early governors, wrote,

4 “Being thus arrived in a good harbor and brought safe to land, they fell upon their knees and blessed the God of heaven.” **5**

READING CHECK **MAIN IDEA AND DETAILS**

Why was the Mayflower Compact important?

It gave the Pilgrims the right to govern themselves.

Building a Colony

Although the Plymouth settlers tried to make wise decisions, the first winter was very hard. It was cold and long. By spring, 50 of the 102 settlers had died.

Help from Native Americans

In the spring, the survivors got a very welcome surprise when an Abenaki Native American named **Samoset** arrived, saying, "Welcome, Englishmen." Samoset had learned English from sailors who fished along the Atlantic coast.

Several days later, Samoset returned to Plymouth with **Tisquantum**, or Squanto, as the English called him. He was a member of the Wampanoag (wahm•puh•NOH•ag) tribe and also spoke English. Years before, Tisquantum had been taken and sold as an enslaved

worker in Spain. After he escaped, he spent several years in England before returning home.

Tisquantum showed the Pilgrims where to fish and how to plant squash, corn, and pumpkins. Because food was scarce, the Pilgrims were glad to live in peace with the Wampanoag. Both groups benefited from their cooperation. The colonists and the Native Americans both had valuable items that the other group wanted.

Tisquantum helped the colonists trade for furs from neighboring tribes. The Native Americans were able to trade furs for items such as metal goods and cloth. Metal goods were very useful to them because the metal could be reshaped and used to make tools or jewelry.

READING CHECK **MAIN IDEA AND DETAILS**

How did Tisquantum help the Pilgrims?

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FAST FACT

How did people share news in earlier times? If there was important news to announce in Plymouth, a drummer would call the colonists to gather.



7 ▶ **THE PILGRIMS' THANKSGIVING** This painting was made nearly 300 years after the original event. How do you think this artist viewed the event?

Plymouth Grows

When the Plymouth colonists first arrived, there was very little food to be had. To help, the colony's leaders divided the harvest equally among the families. Then, in 1623, the leaders decided to divide the land among the colonists. The result was that the people worked harder.

Growing Prosperity

The Plymouth colonists began to prosper from their farming, as well as from fishing and fur trading. As new colonists came, earlier colonists had extra

goods ready to trade. However, the number of people living in Plymouth stayed low in its first ten years. By 1630, there were only about 300 colonists.

Trouble Starts

After 1630, other English colonists began to settle in different areas of New England. Life there began to change. Many of the new colonists were not friendly toward the Native Americans and settled on more of their lands. Some colonists did not see a need to cooperate with the Native Americans. As fights broke out between the two groups, trade between them came to an end.

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This made life harder for the colonists and the Native Americans. William Bradford had once helped make peace with local tribes. He later supported a war to push many Native Americans out of New England. Such actions also caused problems among the tribes. As their homelands grew smaller, tribes fought with each other for control of hunting grounds.

READING CHECK CAUSE AND EFFECT

Why did the relationship between the Native Americans and the colonists change?

Colonists began to settle on more Native American land.

Summary

The Pilgrims left Europe to establish a society based on their religious beliefs. When they arrived in Plymouth, the settlers wrote the Mayflower Compact to set up self-government. Early on, Native Americans helped the colonists, but when colonists moved onto their land, fighting broke out.



► PLYMOUTH PLANTATION HISTORICAL SITE This woman shows Native American skills to visitors.