

The Plymouth Colony

Read Aloud

In December 1620 weary and cold passengers on board a ship called the Mayflower landed near what is now Plymouth, Massachusetts. In their first years, the newcomers might have starved without help from the Wampanoag (wahm puh NOH ahg) people, who helped to keep the little English colony alive.

Focus Activity

READ TO LEARN

How did the Wampanoag people help the Pilgrims at Plymouth?

VOCABULARY

- Mayflower Compact
- sachem

PEOPLE

- Massasoit
- Squanto
- Samoset
- William Bradford
- Miles Standish

PLACES

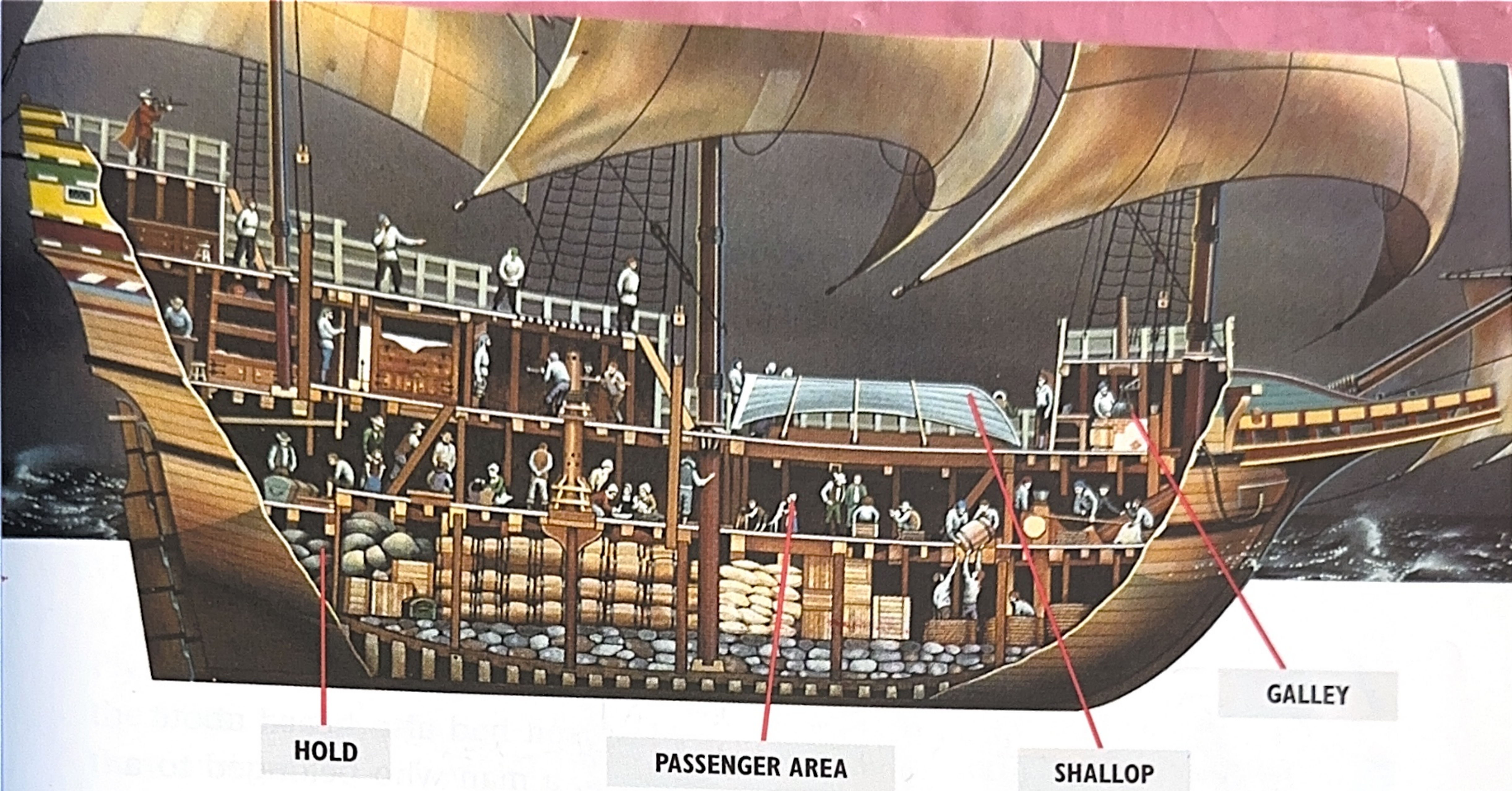
- Cape Cod
- New England
- Plymouth

THE BIG PICTURE

Early in the 1500s much of Europe was divided over religion. The king of England, Henry VIII, broke away from the Roman Catholic Church and set up another Christian church called the Church of England. Church of England members were called Protestants because they had protested against practices of the Catholic Church. They had different beliefs and practices.

But in England some Protestants felt that the Church of England had kept too many Catholic ways. They set up their own churches.

In the early 1600s these Protestants moved to the Netherlands, where they could worship in peace. But life was difficult for them there, and they decided to start a colony in North America. This is the story of these people, who became known as the Pilgrims.



VOYAGE OF THE MAYFLOWER

- ① In 1620 King James I of England allowed the Pilgrims to settle in Virginia. London merchants agreed to pay for the voyage in return for lumber and furs.
- ② On September 16 the Pilgrims and other colonists hired by the merchants set sail from Plymouth, England, in the *Mayflower*. The holds below the deck were stuffed with barrels of salted beef, bread, pigs, chickens, and goats. There were more than 100 passengers on board. They planned to reach Virginia just as winter set in.
- ③ For 66 days the *Mayflower* tossed in the stormy Atlantic. In November lookouts finally saw land. But the land was not Virginia. It was **Cape Cod**, in what is today known as **New England**. A small group went ashore to explore. They “fell upon their knees and blessed the God of

This diagram shows how the inside of the *Mayflower* might have looked. Supplies were stored in the hold; a shallop is a small boat; meals were prepared in the galley. In what space did the Pilgrims stay during their trip?

Heaven, who had brought them over the vast and furious ocean,” wrote one of the passengers.

The Mayflower Compact

- ④ Before they landed, the Pilgrims wrote a compact, or agreement. The **Mayflower Compact** would serve as a form of government for their colony. In it, the Pilgrims agreed to make and obey the colony’s “just and equal laws.” Forty-one men signed the compact. Having few legal rights, women were not asked to sign. But they were still expected to obey all of the compact’s laws.

The Mayflower Compact was an important step. It helped plant the idea of self-government among the colonists in North America.

THE WAMPANOAG AND NEIGHBORS

- English settlement
- Massasoit's village



The Native Americans of New England included many more smaller groups of peoples than those shown on the map.

1. How many Native American peoples are shown on the map? Who are they?
2. What was the name of Massasoit's village?

THE WAMPANOAG

- ① The Pilgrims settled on land that was already home to many Native Americans. The ones they met first were the Wampanoag people, who hunted, farmed, and fished.

Native Americans of New England

- ② Among the other Native Americans were the Narragansett, the Pequot (PEE kwaht), and also the Mohegan. Each group spoke a form of the Algonkian language. Many English words such as *moose*, *woodchuck*, *hickory*, *moccasin*,

squash, and *toboggan* are from the Algonkian language.

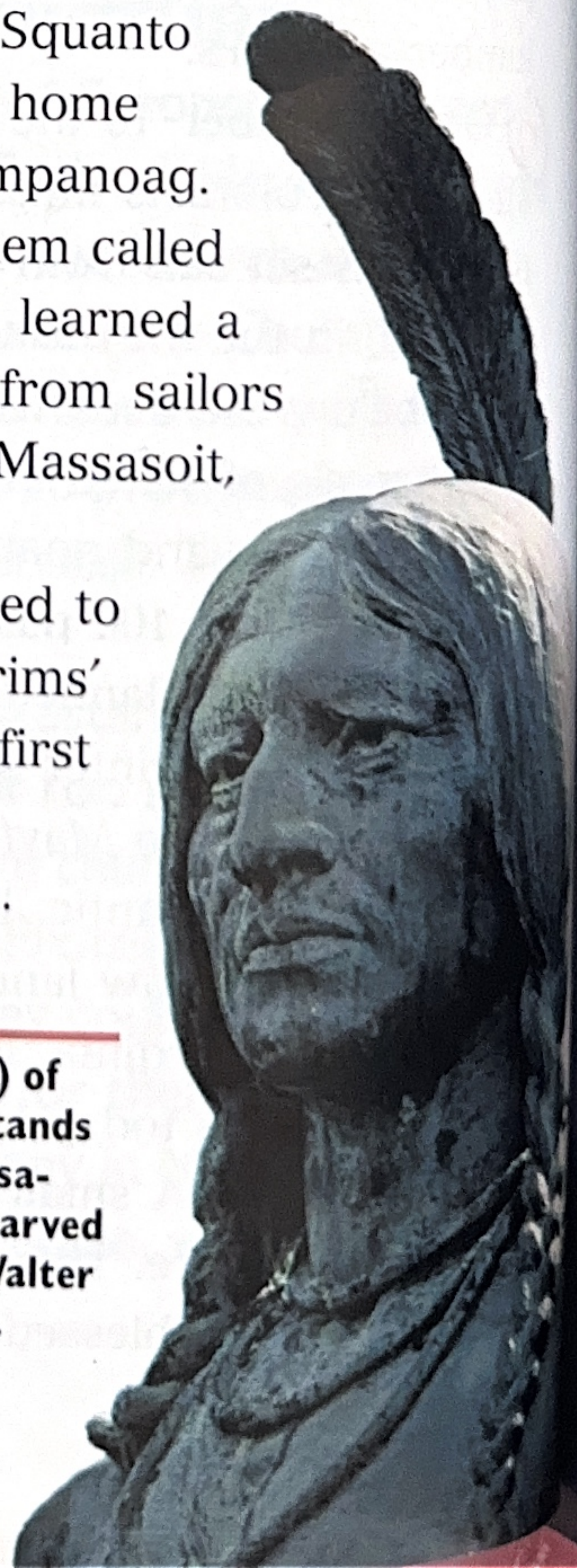
- ③ Each of the Native American peoples had a **sachem** (SAY chum), or leader. **Massasoit** (MAS uh soyt) was the sachem of the Wampanoag in the early 1600s. He probably ruled about 30 communities.

Even before the Pilgrims arrived, Massasoit knew about the strange ships from far away that were reaching the New England coast.

- ④ Massasoit had also heard about **Squanto**, a man who belonged to a Wampanoag community called the Pawtuxet (paw TUK sut). In 1615 Squanto was captured by an English fishing captain and was enslaved in Spain. He escaped to England and returned home in 1619. He found his village empty. His family and friends had all died. Squanto

then found a home with the Wampanoag. Another sachem called **Samoset** had learned a little English from sailors and traders. Massasoit, Squanto, and Samoset helped to save the Pilgrims' lives in their first hard years in New England.

This statue (right) of chief Massasoit stands in Plymouth, Massachusetts. It was carved by the sculptor Walter Meayers Edwards.

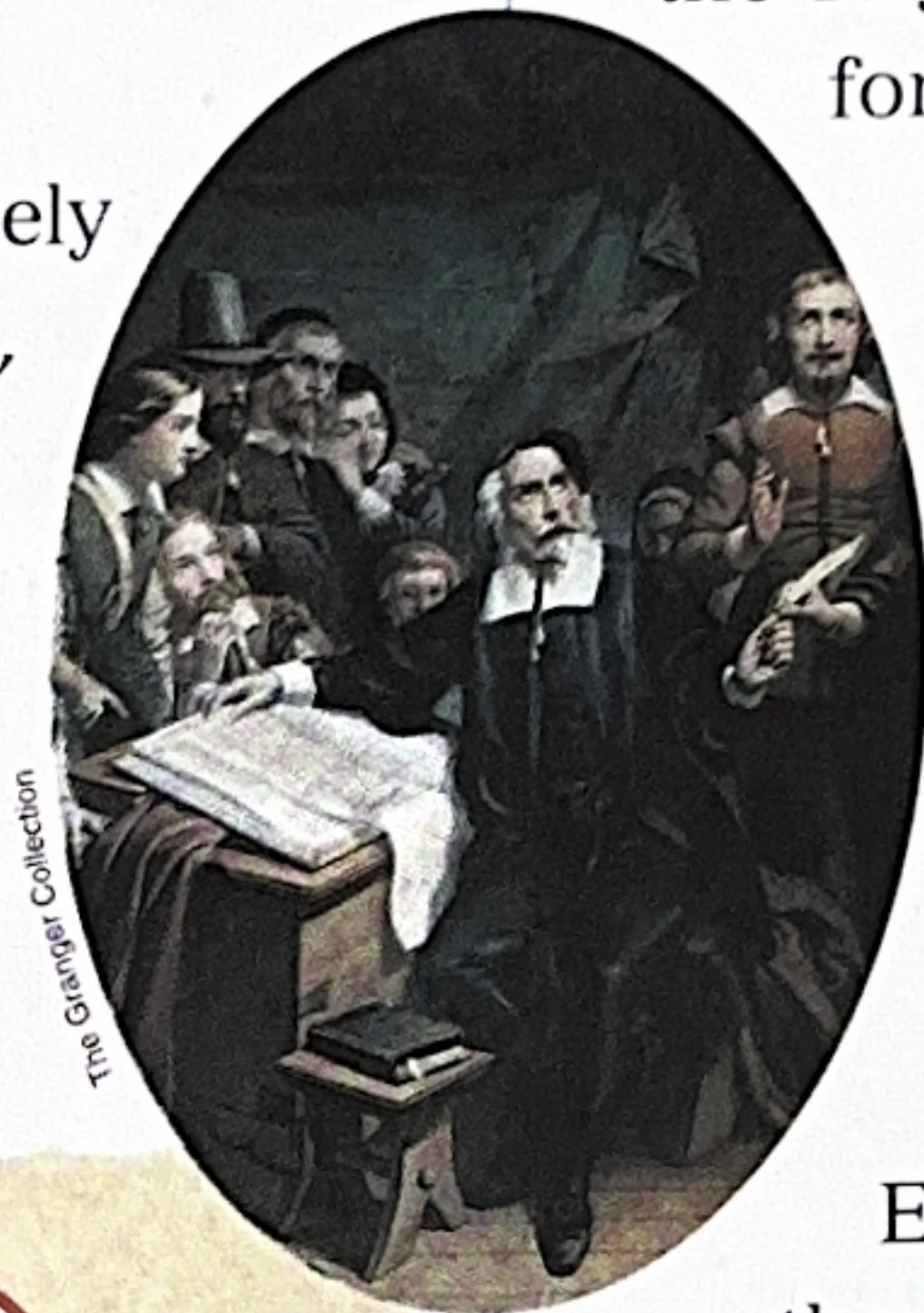


THE PILGRIMS

- ① The Pilgrims decided to settle in a place called **Plymouth**. Captain John Smith had visited and named Plymouth Harbor six years earlier.

Plymouth Colony

- ② The Pilgrims faced a lonely future. One of the Pilgrims, **William Bradford**, wrote a book about life in the Plymouth colony. How did the Pilgrims feel after they arrived?



MANY VOICES

PRIMARY SOURCE

Excerpt from
Of Plymouth Plantation,
written by William Bradford
in 1646.

It was winter, and they that know the winters of the country know them to be sharp and violent, and subject to cruel and fierce storms, dangerous to travel to known places, much more to search an unknown coast.

For summer being done, all things stand upon them with a weather-beaten face, . . . If they looked behind them, there was the mighty ocean which they had passed and was now as a main bar and gulf to separate them from all the civil parts of the world. . . .

What could now sustain them but the spirit of God and His grace?

civil: having to do with cities

- ③ The Pilgrims' first winter was cold and harsh. Everyone went hungry. Many died from disease. By spring, only about half of the Pilgrims were still alive. When their governor died, the Pilgrims elected William Bradford to be leader.

Meeting the Wampanoag

- ④ With spring, hope returned to the Pilgrims. They started planting crops. One morning, Samoset entered their settlement. "Welcome, Englishmen!" he said. He told the surprised newcomers how he had learned their language. A few days later, Samoset returned with Massasoit and Squanto. With the help of Squanto, Massasoit and the leaders of the Pilgrims worked out a lasting peace agreement.

Help from Squanto

The land on which the Pilgrims had settled was once the home of Squanto's people, the Pawtuxet. Squanto decided to stay on with the Pilgrims. He showed the Pilgrims how to plant corn using fish to fertilize the soil. He showed them how to trap rabbits, deer, and other animals.

With Squanto's help, the Pilgrims began to eat better. The sickness of the past winter ended. Squanto was so helpful to the Pilgrims that Bradford called him "a special instrument sent of God for their good."