

Pilgrims & the Mayflower Compact

Primary Source Set Teaching Guide

This Primary Source Set is designed to help students explore why the Pilgrims emigrated to America and the difficulties they encountered during and after their journey. In this set, students will analyze two primary sources -- the Mayflower Compact and a letter written by a Pilgrim who traveled on the Mayflower. Students will use these sources to make inferences about the values and beliefs of the Pilgrims. Students will also consider how the actual events of the "First Thanksgiving" were similar to or different from popular stories recounting the event.

Target Grades & Subject(s): Grades 4-8; Social Studies/History

Learning Objectives

- Students will cite evidence from the Mayflower Compact and the letter from Edward Winslow to describe the convictions of the Pilgrims and the circumstances leading to the "First Thanksgiving." (CCSS RH.2)
- Students will understand the reasons for the Pilgrims' emigration to America and the difficulties they encountered and overcame during the journey. (CCSS RH.1)

Before Teaching this Set

- Prior to analyzing the sources in this set, students should have some familiarity with European exploration during the [Age of Discovery](#) (15th - 18th century). Ask students to brainstorm possible reasons for why settlers might decide to move to the New World. Continue adding to this list as students learn about the Pilgrims while reading the texts in this set.
- Remind students of the difference between primary and secondary sources.

Texts in this Set (download texts [here](#))

Text 1: The Pilgrims Come to America (1 page)	
The first text in this set describes the religious and social reasons that motivated many Separatists to leave Europe and travel to America. This text provides background knowledge that will help students better understand the subsequent primary sources in this set. While reading students will summarize main ideas and describe the journey on the <i>Mayflower</i> .	Extension Activity: The final question embedded in this text asks students to write a journal entry as if they were a Pilgrim who traveled on the <i>Mayflower</i> . Encourage students to use details from the text and other sources to describe their journey and reasons for moving to the New World. Students can also include drawings of the ship or images to depict what the journey was like.
Text 2: The Mayflower Compact (1 page)	
Next, students will read the text of the Mayflower Compact. As they read they will summarize the key ideas and promises being made by the Pilgrims. Students will also make inferences about the Pilgrims' convictions based on evidence in the document.	Extension Activity: Have students create another journal entry that describes the events leading to the creation of the Mayflower Compact and summarizes its key ideas. Challenge students to also infer how most people would have felt about the document and the promises they were making in it.
Text 3: Letter from Edward Winslow (1621) (2 pages)	
The final text in set is a letter written by Edward Winslow, a Pilgrim and leader of the Plymouth colony who traveled on the Mayflower. This letter describes the challenges the Pilgrims faced during their first year in America and the "First Thanksgiving." Students will analyze the text to understand the relationship between the Pilgrims and Native Americans. Students will also consider how the events described in the letter support or contradict other accounts they have heard.	Extension Activity: Ask students to create 1 or 2 more journal entries to describe their first year as a Pilgrim in America and the "First Thanksgiving." Students should include details about their interactions with Native Americans and the challenges their settlement has faced. After completing their entries, have students bind them together to create a book. Provide time for students to share their journals with classmates.