**Who were the Pilgrims?**

The people we know as Pilgrims made the famous 1620 voyage aboard the ship Mayflower and founded Plymouth Colony, but they were also ordinary English men and women.

This story will help you get to know these people, now known as the Pilgrims, through their first years in New England.

England was a Catholic nation until 1534, when King Henry created a new national church called the Church of England.

A few people felt that the new Church needed to return to a less structured forms of worship. They wanted to return to worshipping in the way the early Christians had. Some people, called “Separatists,” demanded the creation of a new, separate church. This opinion was very dangerous; in England in the 1600s, it was illegal to be part of any church other than the Church of England.

The Separatist church that came to America was originally from the small Enbglish town of Scrooby . Members included the young William Bradford and William Brewster. Like others who refused to follow the Church of England’s teachings, some of them were fined or even sent to jail. When they felt they could no longer stay in England, they chose to flee to Holland. There, they could practice their own religion without fear of persecution from the English government or its church.

**The Pilgrims in Holland**

Although they had religious freedom, life in Holland was not easy. The

Separatists had to leave their homeland and friends to live in a foreign country. They stayed briefly in Amsterdam (the capitol of Holland) and then moved to the city of Leiden. There they remained for the next 11 or 12 years. Most found work in the cloth trades, while others were carpenters, tailors and printers. Their lives required hard work. Even young children had to work.

Some older children were surrounded by the Dutch culture. Their parents feared that they would lose their identity as English people. They decided to move again.

**The Move to America**

After careful thought, the congregation decided to leave Holland to establish a farming village in the northern part of the Virginia Colony.

There they hoped to live under the English government, but they would worship in their own, separate church. Because their own money wasn’t enough to establish their village, they entered into an agreement with financial investors. The company of investors would provide passage for the colonists and supply them with tools, clothing and other supplies. The colonists in turn would work for the company, sending natural resources such as fish, timber and furs back to England. Everything, including the land and the Pilgrims’ houses, would belong to the company until the end of seven years when all of it would be divided among each of the investors and colonists. The colonists and investors had many disagreements, but eventually the Pilgrims were able to leave Europe for America.

The entire congregation could not come to America together.

Those who could settle their affairs in Leiden went first while the greater number, including their pastor John Robinson, remained behind.

The group purchased a small ship, *the Speedwell,* to transport them across the sea and to use for fishing and trading in America. At Southampton, a port in England, they were joined by a group of English colonists who had been gathered by the investors. Speedwell and Mayflower – a ship rented by the investors – departed for America together.

After twice turning back to England because Speedwell leaked, they were forced to leave the ship. Many families were divided when some passengers had to be turned back for lack of space. The remaining ship, *the Mayflower* set out alone with 102 passengers.

**Arrival at Plymouth**

Mayflower arrived in New England on November after a voyage of 66 days. Although the Pilgrims had originally intended to settle near New York, poor winds forced the ship to seek shelter at Cape Cod.

Because it was so late in the year and travel around Cape Cod was proving difficult, the passengers decided not to sail further and to remain in New England.

A party of men began exploring the area to find a suitable place to settle. After several weeks, they arrived at what appeared to be an abandoned Indian village. The plentiful water supply, good harbor, fields, and location on a hill made the area a good place for settlement.

The colonists began building their town. While houses were being built, the group continued to live on the ship. Many of the colonists fell ill.

Although the Pilgrims were not starving, their sea-diet was very high in salt, which weakened their bodies on the long journey and during that first winter. As many as two or three people died each day during their first two months on land. Only 52 people survived the first year in Plymouth.

Building a Town & Relationships with Native People

Although they occasionally saw Native People, it wasn’t until four months after their arrival that the colonists met and communicated with them.

In March, they made a treaty with the Indian leader.

The treaty had four part:

* Neither party would harm the other.
* If anything was stolen, it would be returned.
* Both sides agreed to leave their weapons behind when meeting
* The two groups would be friends in times of war.

**Why the name “Pilgrims”?**

A pilgrim is a person who goes on a long journey often with a religious purpose to a foreign land.

'Pilgrim' became the popular term applied to all the *Mayflower* passengers - the English people who settled Plymouth in the 1620s are generally called the Pilgrims.

NAME: :\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ PERIOD : \_\_\_\_

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did the Separatists object to the new church in England?

2. What might happen to people who disagreed with the King and his new church?

3. What kind of work did the Separatists find when they went to Holland to live?

4. Why did they feel they needed to leave Holland?

5. What happened to the ship named Speedwell?

6. What might have caused so many to die during the first winter?

7. What promises (4) did the Indians and Separatists make to each other?

1.

2.

3.

4

8. Why do we call these people ‘Pilgrims?”