**NEW ENGLAND’S GREAT MIGRATION**

Thousands of people left England to find a new life somewhere else. The time when many left was called The Great Migration.” This reading contains some details about that time

**The Beginning of the Migration**

The arrival of the *Mayflower* is starting point of the Great Migration. The year 1620 marks the founding of Plymouth Colony. In September 1620, the *Mayflower* set sail from Plymouth with 101 passengers, including both Separatist believers and non-believers. With the ship’s arrival in December, the English settlement of New England began.

**The peak years**

The peak years of the Great Migration lasted from 1629 to 1640, years when crisis in England reached its height.

In 1629, King Charles got rid of democratic government leaving people he did not like open to persecution and punishment. During the ten years that followed, over twenty thousand men, women, and children left England to settle permanently in an area known as the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

**Reason to Leave England**

Seventeenth-century conditions in England caused hundreds of thousands of people to leave England and seek new homes elsewhere: in Ireland, the Caribbean, and the other colonies of North America. In England, there were few jobs, poor working and living conditions in the city, disease (like the plague) and a lack of opportunity to make a good life. People saw America as a solution to those problems.

**New England Immigrants were different**

Immigrants who came to New England differed from immigrants to other regions in a variety of ways. Unlike colonists who came to live in Virginia or other areas of America, those who came to New England had known relatively good lives in England. In fact, it was a greater economic risk to leave than to stay. From the colonists’ point of view, they gave up economic advantages for an opportunity to live more worthy lives in a settlement governed by religion.

Motivated by religion, most colonists traveled to Massachusetts in families. New England retained relatively equal numbers of men and women. This situation is very different with the southern colonies, which were populated by single young men. In Virginia (Jamestown), at the end of the seventeenth century, the male-to-female sex ratio was very uneven. There were 7 or 8 men for every 1 woman.

New Englanders had a high level of literacy, twice that of old England. New Englanders were highly skilled; more than half of the settlers had been craftsmen. Only about 17% came as servants. In contrast, 75% of Virginia’s population arrived as servants.

Unlike colonists of other regions, the Great Migration colonists who came to New England were primarily middle class. Thus, New England was a remarkably similar population, with colonists sharing similar backgrounds, outlooks, and perspectives.

**Making the Voyage**

The majority of those who left England lived within a few days travel of a port of departure. Ships left from several points along the English coast. Most ships left England in March or April, allowing time for the journey and the ship’s return trip to England before cold weather began again. An average ocean crossing lasted from 8 to 10 weeks but the time of the voyage could vary greatly, from a trip of just 38 days to 6 months.

**The First Year in the New World: The Search for a Town**

Once in New England, settlers usually spent a minimum of several weeks — frequently the entire first winter — in the port town at which they arrived. They had many things to do once they got to America: After gathering information about possible places to settle, they traveled to towns throughout the colony looking for a place to live. Sometimes they moved several times before finding permanent residences. Most chose to move to a town that was less than two years old. The key to success was arriving early after a town’s founding to become a land owner. Land owners received the best and largest land grants. This was extremely important because it meant a good economic future for their children.

**The Land Grab**

Towns limited the number of possible land owners. Once the limit was reached, the town was considered **closed**. 22 towns, from Maine to Rhode Island, were closed within the first 10 years of settlement. Many new towns formed to the north and the south, along the coast. 23 towns in Massachusetts were founded in the 1630s.

**Living a Longer Life**

Another part of life in New England was the remarkable health and long life of the population. Many colonists lived to the age of 70, and a some number lived to be 80. Infant and childhood mortality rates were lower and settlers produced large and healthy families — most having 7 or more children.

New England experienced tremendous population growth within the lifetime of first generation settlers.

**NEW ENGLAND’S GREAT MIGRATION**

1. According to the reading, when did the Great Migration start?

2. What event marked the beginning of the Great Migration?

3. The height of the migration took place during what time period?

4. What were some reasons why people wanted to leave England?

5. Why were people motivated to come to New England as opposed to other destinations?

6. Explain some of the things that made New England immigrants unique.

7. Detail what families would do once they arrived in the Puritan colony.

8. Why was it important to get into a town before it "closed?"

9. Give some reason as to why people in New England lived longer than their counterparts in Old England