**Pilgrims vs. Puritans**

As you read previously, colonists came to America for many reasons. They came to explore, to make money, to spread and practice their religion freely, and to live on land of their own. The Pilgrims and Puritans are two groups of settlers who came to America to practice religious freedom.

In the 1500s, England broke away from the Roman Catholic Church and created a new church called the Church of England. Everyone in England had to belong to the church under government law. There was a group of people called **Separatists** that wanted to separate from the Church of England. The Separatists, under the leadership of William Bradford, decided to leave England and start a settlement of their own so that they could practice their religion freely. Bradford went to the London Company and asked them for permission to establish a new colony in Virginia, where the London Company had already settled in order to make money in Jamestown. The London Company agreed, so the Separatists, known as **Pilgrims**, set sail on the Mayflower in September 1620 towards Virginia. *(A* ***pilgrim*** *is defined as a person who travels for religious reasons)*

The Pilgrims had a long and difficult journey across the Atlantic Ocean. A storm blew them off course and instead of landing in Virginia, they landed further north in Cape Cod. Instead of attempting to reroute their group to Virginia, the Pilgrims decided to stay put and establish the colony of Plymouth. But there was a problem with them staying in this land - there was no form of government to follow. The London Company had given the Pilgrims a charter to settle in Virginia only, rendering the document invalid for Plymouth. The men aboard the Mayflower decided that they would write a plan of government for their colony. This plan of government became known as the **Mayflower Compact**. The men agreed to consult each other about the laws for the colony, and they promised to work together to make the colony succeed. All the men signed the document. Women were not allowed to participate.

The Pilgrims finally stepped foot on land in November of 1620. This was not the best time to establish a colony, as it was very difficult for the Pilgrims to find food and shelter in the middle of winter. By the time spring arrived, half of the colonists had died, and those that remained set out to plant crops and build their colony in an attempt to help those that remained survive. Legend has it that the Pilgrims were taught how to plant corn and other crops suited to the terrain of this area, as well as how to trap animals for food and clothing, by local natives. By fall the colony was saved and as the story goes, to celebrate their success, the Pilgrims and natives together held the first Thanksgiving.

In 1630, another group left England in search of religious freedom. This group was called the **Puritans**. The Puritans wanted to “purify” the Church of England by getting rid of Catholic practices that influenced the church’s teachings. The Puritans did not want to separate entirely from the Church of England; rather, they wanted to make reforms and changes to the religious practices that had been established by church leaders. King Charles I, however, threatened the Puritans with harsh punishments if they did not obey the laws of the Church of England, as that was the established religious practice of the government of England.

Therefore, the Puritans sought freedom in America in order to avoid persecution by the king. The Puritans received a charter to settle land in New England under their leader, John Winthrop. In 1630, Winthrop led approximately 1,000 Puritans to America and established the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The colonists wanted to base the colony on the laws of God. They believed that God would protect them if they obeyed His wishes and lived according to His will. Winthrop wanted to make this colony a model for all other colonies to follow.

Like the other colonies, the Massachusetts Bay Colony established a government. All men who were church members were able to vote for governor and for representatives to the General Court. The General Court would then make laws for the good of the colony.

Name:

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**Pilgrims vs. Puritans Reading Questions**

**Directions:** Use the Pilgrims vs. Puritans reading to answer the following questions and summarize the key information about these two colonial religious groups.

1. What was the name of the church that England created when they broke away from the Roman Catholic Church?
2. What did Separatists want to do?
3. Who was the leader of the Separatists?
4. Who agreed to give the Separatists money for their voyage?
5. What was the name of the ship that the Pilgrims sailed to America on?
6. Where were the Pilgrims supposed to have landed? Why didn’t they land there?
7. Where did the Pilgrims land instead?
8. What was the name of the plan of government the Pilgrims formed before leaving the ship? What did the men agree to do under this form of government?
9. Why did the Puritans want to leave the Church of England?
10. Who was the leader of the Puritans?
11. Describe the government set up by the Puritans.