

Name \_\_\_\_\_



## Pilgrims Seek Religious Freedom in Plymouth

By Sharon Fabian

The time was the early 1600's. The place was England. The century before had seen the Protestant Reformation, and the Church of England was now the official church. A person could not choose to join a different church.

By the 1600's, some members of the Church of England felt that changes were needed. Some people tried to change the church from within; others decided to leave and start their own congregation. Those who decided to leave became known as the Separatists.

Because leaving the church was not allowed, the Separatists soon had to flee the country. In 1609, a group of Separatists led by William Brewster fled to Holland and settled in the town of Leiden.

The Separatists lived in Leiden for years, but never quite felt at home there. It wasn't like England where they had grown up. They couldn't own their own land there either. They thought about leaving Holland.

In 1620, they found merchants who were interested in financing a voyage to America. Forty-one members of the Leiden congregation decided to sail for America. Along with 61 other English people, they set sail in September aboard the *Mayflower*. Just before they left Holland, the Separatists celebrated a Fasting Day in their church to pray for God's guidance on the long journey to come.

On November 21, 1620, they landed at what is now Provincetown Harbor in Massachusetts. After scouting the area, they chose the abandoned Wampanoag village of Patuxet as the site of their first settlement. They called their new home Plymouth.



With the help of the Wampanoag Indians, the Separatists, who became known as Pilgrims after their long trip, settled into their new home. They raised crops like corn that grew well in the soil of their new land. They raised cows and goats. They farmed, cooked, cleaned, and sewed clothes. The Pilgrims leader, Governor Carver, made a peace treaty with the Wampanoag leader, Massasoit.

Three more ships, the *Fortune*, the *Anne*, and the *Little John* brought more Pilgrims to join their settlement.

In Plymouth, the Pilgrims were free to practice their religion the way they chose. Like many religions, they celebrated the Sabbath weekly. They also celebrated two religious holidays, Fasting Day and Thanksgiving Day. These two holidays were not celebrated every year; they were only celebrated in special circumstances.

The Pilgrims also had traditional, non-religious celebrations. One of these was a yearly harvest festival. That first year in America, they shared a celebration feast with the Wampanoag Indians.

In 1623, the year started out with a good spring planting, but then their luck changed. There was a drought, and their crops of corn and beans became withered and brown. They were already low on food, and it had been a long time since a supply ship had arrived from England. The Pilgrims observed a Fasting Day. They fasted and prayed for relief from the weather.

In the morning, it rained. Then they received more good news; a supply ship was on its way. The Pilgrims' fortunes had changed. Now, their church decided to celebrate by holding an official Thanksgiving Day. They attended a long church service where they sang, prayed, and listened to preaching.

The Pilgrims probably called that celebration in 1623 their first Thanksgiving. Today, when we think of the first Thanksgiving, we usually picture something more like the harvest festival of 1621.



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**Questions**

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- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. The Separatists \_\_\_\_\_.
  - A. had left the Church of England
  - B. were loyal members of the Church of England
  - C. were Catholics
  - D. were Native Americans
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. After their first year in America, the Pilgrims celebrated \_\_\_\_\_.
  - A. Thanksgiving
  - B. a harvest festival
  - C. both
  - D. neither
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. The Separatists lived in all of the following places, except \_\_\_\_\_.
  - A. England
  - B. Holland
  - C. Ireland
  - D. America
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. When the Pilgrims arrived in America, they met the \_\_\_\_\_ Indians, who already lived here.
  - A. Cherokee
  - B. Wampanoag
  - C. Sioux
  - D. Massasoit
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Patuxet was \_\_\_\_\_.
  - A. an Indian village
  - B. an Indian tribe
  - C. a Pilgrim leader
  - D. an Indian leader

- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. The Pilgrims celebrated Thanksgiving in 1623 with \_\_\_\_\_.
  - A. football on TV
  - B. corn and beans
  - C. prayer and songs
  - D. turkey and pumpkin pie
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. To the Pilgrims, Fasting Day and Thanksgiving Day were \_\_\_\_\_.
  - A. religious holidays
  - B. days to feast
  - C. not celebrated
  - D. days to exchange gifts
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. The Pilgrims who settled in and around Plymouth in the first few years arrived on \_\_\_\_\_ ship(s).
  - A. three
  - B. one
  - C. four
  - D. two

**Explain how the religious beliefs of some of the Pilgrims led to them settling in Plymouth.**

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