In the character of a Mayflower Pilgrim, write a letter to a friend or family member in England explaining why you have chosen to make this dangerous journey and what you hope to discover and do in the New World. If desired, print the letter in a 17th-century font, such as Secretary Script or other old-fashined calligraphy, to add authenticity. Then illustrate the letter with a drawing for your portfolio or a hand-drawn or hard-matt-paper.

Go online or visit your local school or public library to learn more about the word “Mayflower.” Have you ever sailed in a galleon, making a journey for spiritual or other special reasons? Write a short essay describing this journey, or a pilgrimage you would like to make someday. Share your essay with friends or classmates, discussing how these experiences would help others better understand the motivations and choices made by the Plymouth Colony Pilgrims.

Using information from the book and other resources if desired, create a guide to the Native American tribes and colonial settlements of 1600 New England. For each group, note its location, the names of leaders, its alliances to other tribes, settlements or European nations, and one in the news during King Philip’s War. Organize your information on a chart or in a brochure.

Experience the challenges of interacting with people of another culture. List cards: “customs” and “objectives” and fill them with cards as follows: “Customs” cards might include “makes fist for greeting,” “a sausage to show others show our heart graduates,” or “is offended by smiles.” “Objectives” cards might include “bend over a pencil,” “trade a book for a box of tea,” or “get the other person to pass for a walk.” Divide into pairs. One person, the Pilgrim, selects an objective card and assumes modern-day manners and language. The other person, the Native American, selects a customs card, which guides his or her behavior, and does not speak English (bill, if you speak another language not understood by your partner, such as Spanish or Japanese, you may use this language). Pass the cards to the other person for him or her to examine and accomplish the objective. Afterward, discuss how this exercise helped you understand the challenges faced by Pilgrims and Native Americans in terms of understanding and trust.

www.nationalbookaward.org/class/ebooks.html to read the Articles of Confederation (Parts I and II) under the U.S. Constitution (Preamble and Part I). It is a short essay, and you should use the abbreviated spelling of the Mayflower Compact on the words of those documents, and why Nathaniel Philbrick calls all five “essential American text[s].” Or read the Constitution of the Iroquois Nations (www.iroqoisconfederation.org/en/iroqois.html) and write an essay explaining the assertion “the Founding Fathers based the provisions of the Constitution on the same system of democracy as the Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy, which divided power among the branches of government and provided for a system of checks and balances . . . .” (Congressional Bill HR 2056, proposing a Native American National Day).

In his later years, William Bradford prepared his own synopsis of the future of the Plymouth Colony, based on an information from the book, the script for a two-minute play in which Bradford warns several future young Plymouth residents of his concerns. How might these less religious, more presently-focused individuals react in Bradford’s world? What sort of actions might you accumulate your play? Perform your play for the classmates or family members.

Learn more about the Massachusetts Bay Colony, Harvard College, the Pequot War, the settlement of New Haven, Rhode Island, and the Quakers, in this New World, the United Colonies of New England, the Connecticut Charter, or another topic inspired by your reading of The Mayflower and the Pilgrims’ New World. Present the results of your research as an informational poster, including a timeline and illustrations or other graphic elements.

Going to war is a serious decision for a nation. Go to the library or online to learn about the events that drew America into World War I, World War II, the Korean War, or Gulf War, or to the library or online to research a battlefront of conflict among the Pilgrims and the Foxes. Present the results of your research as an informational poster, including a timeline and illustrations or other graphic elements.

In choosing prose, Nathaniel Philbrick evokes the drama of the voyage of the Mayflower and the many misfortunes of coastal Massachusetts that greeted the Pilgrims. He tells how the settlers were able to gain the friendship of many powerful Native American leaders, and how they worked together to maintain peace. But the promise of the First Thanksgiving was broken with the next generation of leaders. The Mayflower and the Pilgrims’ New World is the perfect introduction for young readers in this epic story, all in prose and poetic.

Also available for young readers by Nathaniel Philbrick:

Revenge of the Whale: The True Story of the Whaleship Essex

On November 20, 2003, the whaleship Essex was rammed and sunk by an angry whale. Within minutes, the brave crew was cast aside, including Captain and cabin boy Thomas Nickerson, found themselves stranded in three lucky boats in the middle of the Pacific Ocean with little or no supplies and little hope. These months later, two of the boats were rescued 4,400 miles away, off the coast of South America. Of the twenty-two castaways, only eight survived, including young Thomas. Nathaniel Philbrick’s Revenge of the Whale is the National Book Award winner in the heart of the Sea Nathaniel Philbrick recreates the amazing events of the Essex’s journey through the tale of a first-hand account, philos, maps, and artwork, and tells the tale of the American dream.

R E S E A R C H & W R I T I N G A C T I V I T I E S

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• Go online or visit your local school library to learn more about the word “Mayflower.” Have you ever sailed in a galleon, making a journey for spiritual or other special reasons? Write a short essay describing this journey, or a pilgrimage you would like to make someday. Share your essay with friends or classmates, discussing how these experiences would help others better understand the motivations and choices made by the Plymouth Colony Pilgrims.
• Using information from the book and other resources if desired, create a guide to the Native American tribes and colonial settlements of 1600 New England. For each group, note its location, the names of leaders, its alliances to other tribes, settlements or European nations, and one in the news during King Philip’s War. Organize your information on a chart or in a brochure.
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D I S C U S S I O N  G U I D E

The Mayflower and the Pilgrims’ New World

NATHANIEL PHILBRICK

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ultimately the journey of James Cook, known ship which explored the Pacific, helped to establish the first European contact with the local population.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

**Part I: Discovery**

1. Why did the Pilgrims decide to attempt settlement in the New World? Do you think their ideas were realistic? Why did they resist settling in Massachusetts instead of their intended Virginia? Do you think any group traveling in the 1620s could have done better, given the resources available at the time?

2. Why did the Pilgrims and other passengers decide to forsake the Mayflower Compact? What is the main objective, or principle, laid out in the Compact?

3. What happened to the Native American population in the years just before the Pilgrims’ arrival and how did Europeans contribute to this catastrophe? What significant additions did the Pilgrims make in terms of establishing contact with their Native American neighbors? How did these efforts affect the early Pilgrim-Native American interactions?

4. Compare and contrast the Mayflower Compact with the Pilgrims’ initial agreement with the Wampanoag sachem Massasoit. How do these documents reflect the Pilgrims’ attitudes toward the Adventurers and the Pokanokets?

5. How does the author’s account of the First Thanksgiving differ from previous descriptions you have read? Discuss the relationship between the Pilgrims, the Pokanokets, and the other strangers of New England at this moment in history.

**Part II: Community**

1. Discuss how the New World in which the title of the book’s second section can be understood. How did the Pilgrims view themselves and their efforts in the contest of Plymouth, of European settlements in New England, and of the New World community, including their Native American neighbors?

2. What role did Squanto and the Wampanoag community play in the dangerous management of colonial and Native American alliances? Who helped to eventualize the Pilgrims’ relationship with Massachusetts and how did this lead to the attack on Squanto? How does this early attack provide a blueprint for the Colonial-Indian conflicts of the ensuing years?

3. How did the establishment of the Massachusetts Colony and the Great Migration of the 1630s to the New World impact the Pilgrims? What was the importance of the United Colonies of New England? How did Native American leaders, such as Metacom, also recognize and attempt to adapt to the needs for cooperation among their own peoples? What were the results of these efforts?

4. How and why did the Plymouth colony begin to spread and disperse during the 1630s? Why did this go wrong? Godward Bradford from a religious perspective? How did he connect this concern to his dissipation in gun sales to the Indians?

5. Who were the “Praying Indians”? Were colonial missionary efforts to convert Indians successful? In the many conflicts between colonial and Indian groups, were religion the necessary factor? Why and why not?

6. In what ways did the attitudes of Massachusetts’s sons and the loss of the Mayflower Pilgrims change in similar fashion? Do you think they simply forgot the original sources? What other factors may have impacted the viewpoints of these young men?

7. How was the death of Alexander a turning point in Pilgrim-Indian relations? Do you think the Pilgrims were right to call Philip Metacomet repeatedly into Plymouth court? What was the charge? What were his punishments paid?

**POST READING QUESTIONS**

1. How might the Pilgrims and Native Americans of 1620s have defined the terms spirituality, prosperity, property ownership, and loyalty and war? What did they understand by their children or grandchildren have defined these notions in 1630? What ways did these two groups bring about changes to each other’s definitions? How do you think these changes affected the land that would, in a century become the United States of America?

2. Why are the stories of the First Thanksgiving and Plymouth Rock, though more legend than fact, still important parts of American history? How does understanding the war these stories embolden the legend help us understand more about American history and culture? Might this change the way you study other famous historical moments?

3. In what way has this book impacted your understanding of colonial America? How might you see the story of the Pilgrims journey to other tribes?