

from *Of Plymouth Plantation*

Chronicle by WILLIAM BRADFORD

Connect to Your Life

The Pilgrims What do you know about the Pilgrims? How, when, and why did they come to North America? With a small group of classmates, discuss facts and images that come to mind when you think of the Pilgrims. Collect the group's impressions in a cluster diagram.

Build Background

In England during the 1500s and 1600s, a group of Protestants called Puritans led a movement to "purify" the Church of England. One group of Puritans, the Separatists, wanted to withdraw from the established church. Separatist groups were declared illegal, and members faced arrest for practicing their beliefs. One congregation of Separatists, known today as the Pilgrims, fled from England to Holland and eventually migrated to America. In September 1620, this group sailed across the Atlantic on the *Mayflower*. Blown off course, the *Mayflower* reached the tip of Cape Cod, in what is now Massachusetts, in early November. While the ship was moored in Provincetown Harbor, some of the group set out in a smaller boat to search for a good place to build a settlement. About a month later, the colonists built their first shelter at Plymouth.

Nearly half of the colonists died during the first brutal winter, but the entire colony might have perished without the aid of the Wampanoag and other Native American groups. Under Governor William Bradford's leadership, the colony not only survived but also grew to about 300 people by 1630. Bradford wrote about the Pilgrims' long journey and their settlement at Plymouth.



WORDS TO KNOW Vocabulary Preview

aloof	providence
commodity	procure
desolate	sentinel
feigned	solace
hue	vanquish

Focus Your Reading

LITERARY ANALYSIS PRIMARY SOURCES

Primary sources are written or created by people who observed or participated in an historical event. Primary sources include letters, diaries, speeches, newspaper articles, and eyewitness accounts. *Of Plymouth Plantation*, William Bradford's chronicle of Pilgrim settlers in North America, is an example of a primary source. The passages you are about to read provide direct, firsthand knowledge about a small band of Pilgrims who founded Plymouth colony. As you read this primary source for factual information, also note Bradford's opinions, biases, assumptions, and point of view.

ACTIVE READING SUMMARIZING

Summarizing means condensing what you read into fewer words. As you summarize, you restate the main ideas and most important details. Summarizing helps clarify your understanding of the key information in a piece of writing. The process will be especially useful for reading *Of Plymouth Plantation*, in which the long, complex sentences may divert you from grasping the most essential points.

READER'S NOTEBOOK This selection has five sections, each labeled with a boldfaced heading. Copy the boldfaced headings onto a page of your notebook, leaving writing space below each one. Then, as you read, write a one- or two-sentence summary of each section. Restate the key ideas in your own words.

FROM

OF PLYMOUTH PLANTATION



WILLIAM BRADFORD

THEIR SAFE ARRIVAL AT CAPE COD

But to omit other things (that I may be brief) after long beating at sea they¹ fell with that land which is called Cape Cod; the which being made and certainly known to be it, they were not a little joyful. . . .

Being thus arrived in a good harbor, and brought safe to land, they fell upon their knees and blessed the God of Heaven who had brought them over the

vast and furious ocean, and delivered them from all the perils and miseries thereof, again to set their feet on the firm and stable earth, their proper element. . . .

But here I cannot but stay and make a pause, and stand half amazed at this

1. they: Bradford refers to the Pilgrims in the third person even though he is one of them.

poor people's present condition; and so I think will the reader, too, when he well considers the same. Being thus passed the vast ocean, and a sea of troubles before in their preparation (as may be remembered by that which went before), they had now no friends to welcome them nor inns to entertain or refresh their weatherbeaten bodies; no houses or much less towns to repair to, to seek for succor.² It is recorded in Scripture as a mercy to the Apostle and his shipwrecked company, that the barbarians showed them no small kindness in refreshing them,³ but these savage barbarians, when they met with them (as after will appear) were readier to fill their sides full of arrows than otherwise. And for the season it was winter, and they that know the winters of that country know them to be sharp and violent, and subject to cruel and fierce storms, dangerous to travel to known places, much more to search an unknown coast. Besides, what could they see but a hideous and desolate wilderness, full of wild beasts and wild men—and what multitudes there might be of them they knew not. Neither could they, as it were, go up to the top of Pisgah⁴ to view from this wilderness a more goodly country to feed their hopes; for which way soever they turned their eyes (save upward to the heavens) they could have little solace or content in respect of any outward objects. For summer being done, all things stand upon them with a weatherbeaten face, and the whole country, full of woods and thickets, represented a wild and savage hue. If they looked behind them, there was the mighty ocean which they had passed and was now as a main bar and gulf to separate them from all the civil parts of the world. . . .

THE FIRST ENCOUNTER

Being thus arrived at Cape Cod the 11th of November, and necessity calling them to look out a place for habitation (as well as the master's

and mariners' importunity); they having brought a large shallop⁵ with them out of England, stowed in quarters in the ship, they now got her out and set their carpenters to work to trim her up; but being much bruised and shattered in the ship with foul weather, they saw she would be long in mending. Whereupon a few of them tendered themselves to go by land and discover those nearest places, whilst the shallop was in mending; . . .

After this, the shallop being got ready, they set out again for the better discovery of this place, and the master of the ship desired to go himself. So there went some thirty men but found it to be no harbor for ships but only for boats. There was also found two of their [the Indians'] houses covered with mats, and sundry of their implements in them, but the people were run away and could not be seen. Also there was found more of their corn and of their beans of various colors; the corn and beans they [the English] brought away, purposing to give them [the Indians] full satisfaction when they should meet with any of them as, about some six months afterward they did, to their good content.⁶

And here is to be noted a special providence of God, and a great mercy to this poor people, that here they got seed to plant them corn the next year, or else they might have starved, for they had none nor any likelihood to get any till

2. **succor** (sŭk'ər): help; relief.

3. **It is . . . refreshing them:** a reference to the biblical account of the courteous reception of Paul and his companions by the inhabitants of Malta (Acts 27:41–28:2).

4. **Pisgah** (pĭz'gə): the mountain from whose peak Moses saw the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 34:1–4).

5. **shallop** (shāl'əp): an open boat usually used in shallow waters.

6. **purposing . . . content:** intending to repay the Nauset Indians whose corn and beans they took, as they in fact did, to the Indians' satisfaction, six months later.

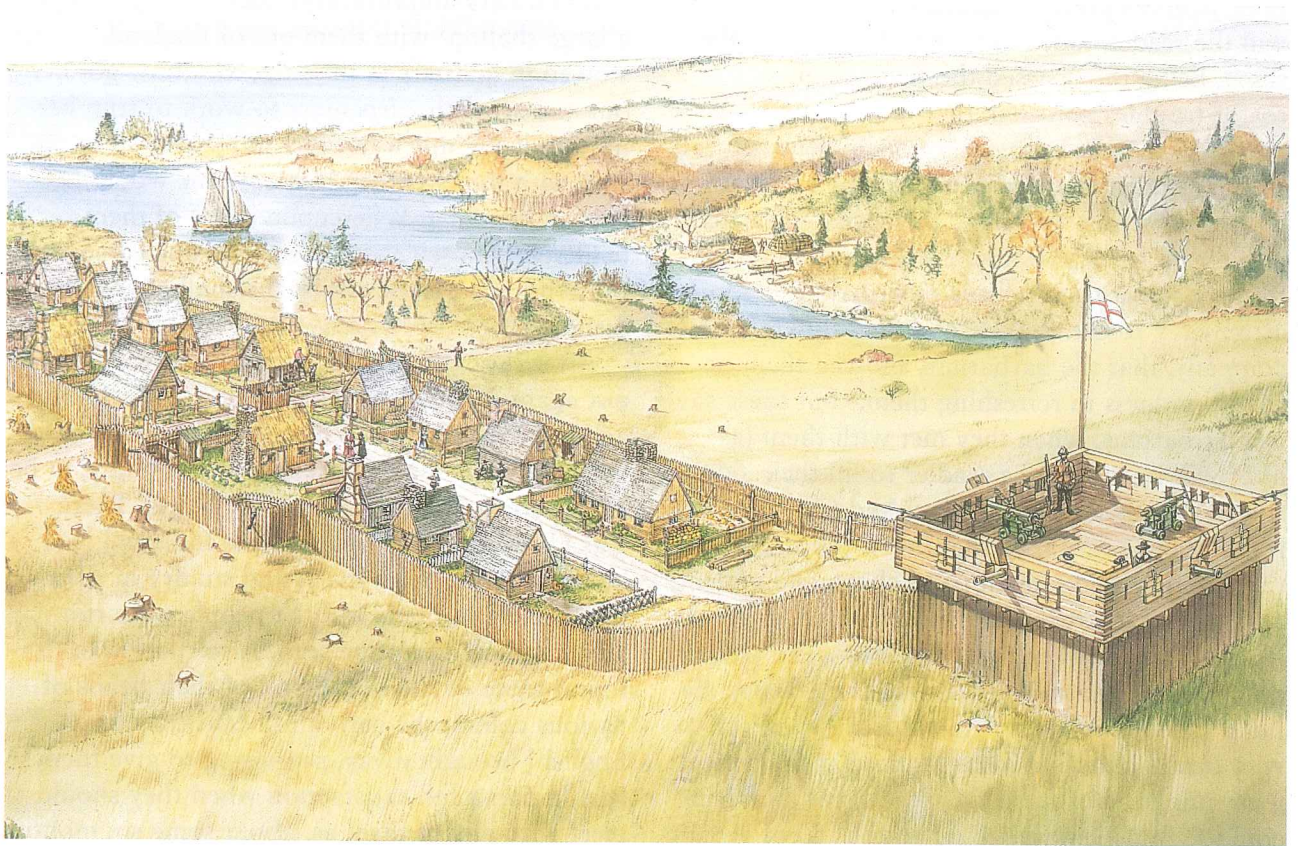
WORDS
TO
KNOW

desolate (dēs'ə-līt) *adj.* without inhabitants; barren

solace (səl'īs) *n.* comfort in sorrow or distress

hue (hyōō) *n.* appearance; color

providence (prōv'ĭ-dens) *n.* an instance of divine care or guidance



View of Plymouth (1627), Cal Sachs. American Heritage Picture Collection, New York.

the season had been past, as the sequel did manifest. Neither is it likely they had had this, if the first voyage had not been made, for the ground was now all covered with snow and hard frozen; but the Lord is never wanting unto His in their greatest needs; let His holy name have all the praise.

The month of November being spent in these affairs, and much foul weather falling in, the 6th of December they sent out their shallop again with ten of their principal men and some seamen, upon further discovery, intending to circulate that deep bay of Cape Cod. The weather was very cold and it froze so hard as the spray of the sea lighting on their coats, they were as if they had been glazed. . . . [The next night

they landed and] made them a barricado⁷ as usually they did every night, with logs, stakes, and thick pine boughs, the height of a man, leaving it open to leeward,⁸ partly to shelter them from the cold and wind (making their fire in the middle and lying round about it) and partly to defend them from any sudden assaults of the savages, if they should surround them; so being very weary, they betook them to rest. But about midnight they heard a hideous and great cry, and their sentinel called "Arm! arm!" So they bestirred them and stood to their arms and

7. **barricado** (bă'r-ĭ-kă'dō): a barrier for defense.

8. **to leeward** (lē'wərd): on the side sheltered from the wind.

WORDS
TO **sentinel** (sĕn'tĕ-nəl) *n.* a guard
KNOW

shot off a couple of muskets, and then the noise ceased. They concluded it was a company of wolves or such like wild beasts, for one of the seamen told them he had often heard such a noise in Newfoundland.

So they rested till about five of the clock in the morning; for the tide, and their purpose to go from thence, made them be stirring betimes. So after prayer they prepared for breakfast, and it being day dawning it was thought best to be carrying things down to the boat. But some said it was not best to carry the arms down, others said they would be the readier, for they had lapped them up in their coats from the dew; but some three or four would not carry theirs till they went themselves. Yet as it fell out, the water being not high enough, they laid them down on the bank side and came up to breakfast.

But presently, all on the sudden, they heard a great and strange cry, which they knew to be the same voices they heard in the night, though they varied their notes; and one of their company being abroad came running in and cried, "Men, Indians! Indians!" And withal, their arrows came flying amongst them. Their men ran with all speed to recover their arms, as by the good providence of God they did. In the meantime, of those that were there ready, two muskets were discharged at them, and two more stood ready in the entrance of their rendezvous⁹ but were commanded not to shoot till they could take full aim at them. And the other two charged again with all speed, for there were only four had arms there, and defended the barricado, which was first assaulted. The cry of the Indians was dreadful, especially when they [the Indians] saw their men [the English] run out of the rendezvous toward the shallop to recover their arms, the Indians wheeling about upon them. But some running out with coats of mail on, and cutlasses¹⁰ in their hands, they [the English] soon got their arms and let fly amongst them [the Indians] and quickly stopped their violence. . . .

Thus it pleased God to vanquish their enemies and give them deliverance; and by His special providence so to dispose that not any one of them were either hurt or hit, though their arrows came close by them and on every side [of] them; and sundry of their coats, which hung up in the barricado, were shot through and through. Afterwards they gave God solemn thanks and praise for their deliverance, and gathered up a bundle of their arrows and sent them into England afterward by the master of the ship, and called that place the First Encounter. . . .

THE STARVING TIME

But that which was most sad and lamentable was, that in two or three months' time half of their company died, especially in January and February, being the depth of winter, and wanting houses and other comforts; being infected with the scurvy¹¹ and other diseases which this long voyage and their inaccommodate condition had brought upon them. So as there died some times two or three of a day in the foresaid time, that of 100 and odd persons, scarce fifty remained. And of these, in the time of most distress, there was but six or seven sound persons who to their great commendations, be it spoken, spared no pains night nor day, but with abundance of toil and hazard of their own health fetched them wood, made them fires, dressed them meat, made their beds, washed their loathsome clothes, clothed and unclothed them. . . . In a word, did all the homely and necessary offices for them which dainty and queasy stomachs cannot endure to hear named; and all this willingly and cheerfully, without any grudging in the least, showing herein their true love unto their friends

9. rendezvous (răn'dā-vōō'): a gathering place; here used to denote the Pilgrims' encampment.

10. coats of mail . . . and cutlasses: armor made of joined metal links, and short curved swords.

11. scurvy (skûr've): a disease caused by lack of vitamin C.

WORDS
TO
KNOW

vanquish (văng'kwīsh) *v.* to defeat in battle

and brethren; a rare example and worthy to be remembered. Two of these seven were Mr. William Brewster, their reverend Elder, and Myles Standish, their Captain and military commander, unto whom myself and many others were much beholden in our low and sick condition. And yet the Lord so upheld these persons as in this general calamity they were not at all infected either with sickness or lameness. . . .

INDIAN RELATIONS

All this while the Indians came skulking about them, and would sometimes show themselves aloof off, but when any approached near them, they would run away; and once they [the Indians] stole away their [the colonists'] tools where they had been at work and were gone to dinner. But about the 16th of March, a certain Indian came boldly amongst them and spoke to them in broken English, which they could well understand but marveled at it. At length they understood by discourse with him, that he was not of these parts, but belonged to the eastern parts where some English ships came to fish, with whom he was acquainted and could name sundry of them by their names, amongst whom he had got his language. He became profitable to them in acquainting them with many things concerning the state of the country in the east parts where he lived, which was afterwards profitable unto them; as also of the people here, of their names, number and strength, of their situation and distance from this place, and who was chief amongst them. His name was Samoset. He told them also of another Indian whose name was Squanto, a native of this place, who had been in England and could speak better English than himself.

Being, after some time of entertainment and gifts dismissed, a while after he came again, and five more with him, and they brought again all the tools that were stolen away before, and made

way for the coming of their great Sachem,¹² called Massasoit. Who, about four or five days after, came with the chief of his friends and other attendance, with the aforesaid Squanto. With whom, after friendly entertainment and some gifts given him, they made a peace with him (which hath now continued this 24 years) in these terms:

1. That neither he nor any of his should injure or do hurt to any of their people.

2. That if any of his did hurt to any of theirs, he should send the offender, that they might punish him.

3. That if anything were taken away from any of theirs, he should cause it to be restored; and they should do the like to his.

4. If any did unjustly war against him, they would aid him; if any did war against them, he should aid them.

5. He should send to his neighbors confederates to certify them of this, that they might not wrong them, but might be likewise comprised in the conditions of peace.¹³

6. That when their men came to them, they should leave their bows and arrows behind them.

After these things he returned to his place called Sowams,¹⁴ some 40 miles from this place, but Squanto continued with them and was their interpreter and was a special instrument sent of God for their good beyond their expectation. He directed them how to set their corn, where to take fish, and to procure other commodities, and was also their pilot to bring them to unknown places for their profit, and never left them till he died.

12. **Sachem** (sā'chəm): chief.

13. **He should . . . peace**: Massasoit was to send representatives to inform other tribes of the compact with the Pilgrims so other tribes might also keep peace with them.

14. **Sowams** (sō'amz): near the site of present-day Barrington, Rhode Island.

WORDS **aloof** (ə-lōōf') *adj.* distant
 TO **procure** (prō-kyōōr') *v.* to get by special effort; obtain
 KNOW **commodity** (kə-mōd'ī-tē) *n.* something useful; an article of commerce



The Bettmann Archive, New York.

FIRST THANKSGIVING

They began now to gather in the small harvest they had, and to fit up their houses and dwellings against winter, being all well recovered in health and strength and had all things in good plenty. For as some were thus employed in affairs abroad, others were exercised in fishing, about cod and bass and other fish, of which they took good store, of which every family had their portion. All the summer there was no want; and now began to come in store of fowl, as winter approached, of which this place did abound

when they came first (but afterward decreased by degrees). And besides waterfowl there was great store of wild turkeys, of which they took many, besides venison, etc. Besides they had about a peck¹⁵ a meal a week to a person, or now since harvest, Indian corn to that proportion. Which made many afterwards write so largely of their plenty here to their friends in England, which were not feigned but true reports. ❖

15. peck: a unit of measurement equal to eight dry quarts.

WORDS
TO
KNOW

feigned (fānd) *adj.* not real; pretended

Connect to the Literature


1. What Do You Think?

What is your impression of the Pilgrims after reading these excerpts from *Of Plymouth Plantation*?

Comprehension Check

- How did the Pilgrims view the landscape of Cape Cod when they first arrived?
- What kind of weather did the Pilgrims face after they landed?
- How did the Native Americans help the Pilgrims survive?

Think Critically

2. **ACTIVE READING** **SUMMARIZING** Share your section summaries from your  **READER'S NOTEBOOK** with a partner. Do they include the most important information? Were all unnecessary details dropped?

3. On the basis of these excerpts, what conclusions can you draw about the Pilgrims' way of looking at the world?

THINK ABOUT

- their attitude toward nature
- their attitude toward God
- their attitude toward Native Americans

4. Do you think the treaty between the Wampanoag and the Pilgrims was fair? Why or why not? Support your answers with references from the selection.

Extend Interpretations

5. **What If?** What do you think might have happened if Squanto had not helped the Pilgrims? Explain your opinion, using evidence from the selection.
6. **Comparing Texts** Both *Of Plymouth Plantation* and *La Relación* describe Europeans' encounters with Native Americans. Compare the ways in which the Pilgrims and Cabeza de Vaca's men interacted with the Native Americans they met. What do you think accounts for any similarities or differences?
7. **Connect to Life** Religious persecution forced the Pilgrims to flee from England to Holland and later to settle in North America. Think of another group of people who faced persecution for their religious or political beliefs. Briefly explain what happened to them, and compare and contrast their experiences with the Pilgrims' ordeals.

Literary Analysis

PRIMARY SOURCES Primary

sources, such as diaries and personal histories, often reveal the beliefs and motives of the people involved in an historical event, their ability to overcome obstacles, and the distinctive features of time and place in which they lived. *Of Plymouth Plantation* provides a glimpse of the past through the eyes of William Bradford. As governor of the Plymouth colony and eyewitness to the events he describes, William Bradford is considered a reliable source of information.

Paired Activity Work with a partner to analyze *Of Plymouth Plantation* as a primary source. Consider Bradford's purpose (reason for writing), point of view (narrative perspective from which events are told), assumptions (preconceived ideas) and biases (personal prejudices). Make and fill in a chart like the one shown to record your analyses.

Source	Purpose	Point of View	Assumptions	Biases
<i>Of Plymouth Plantation</i>				

REVIEW **CONFLICT** **Conflict**, as you remember, is a struggle between opposing forces. **Internal conflicts** are within a character; **external conflicts** pit a character against nature, society, or another character. What conflicts are described in this excerpt from *Of Plymouth Plantation*. Are they mostly internal or external?