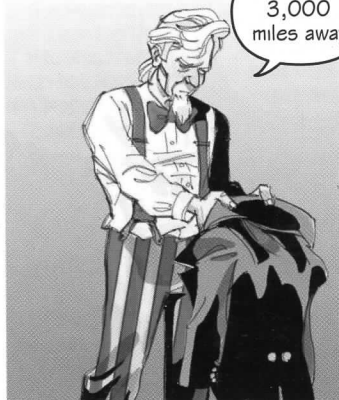


# The Mayflower Compact

The story of great American documents starts in 1620, with a small group of English men, women, and children who dreamed of a new life on a new

continent  
3,000  
miles away.



The 102 passengers on the *Mayflower* did not all share the same beliefs or values . . .

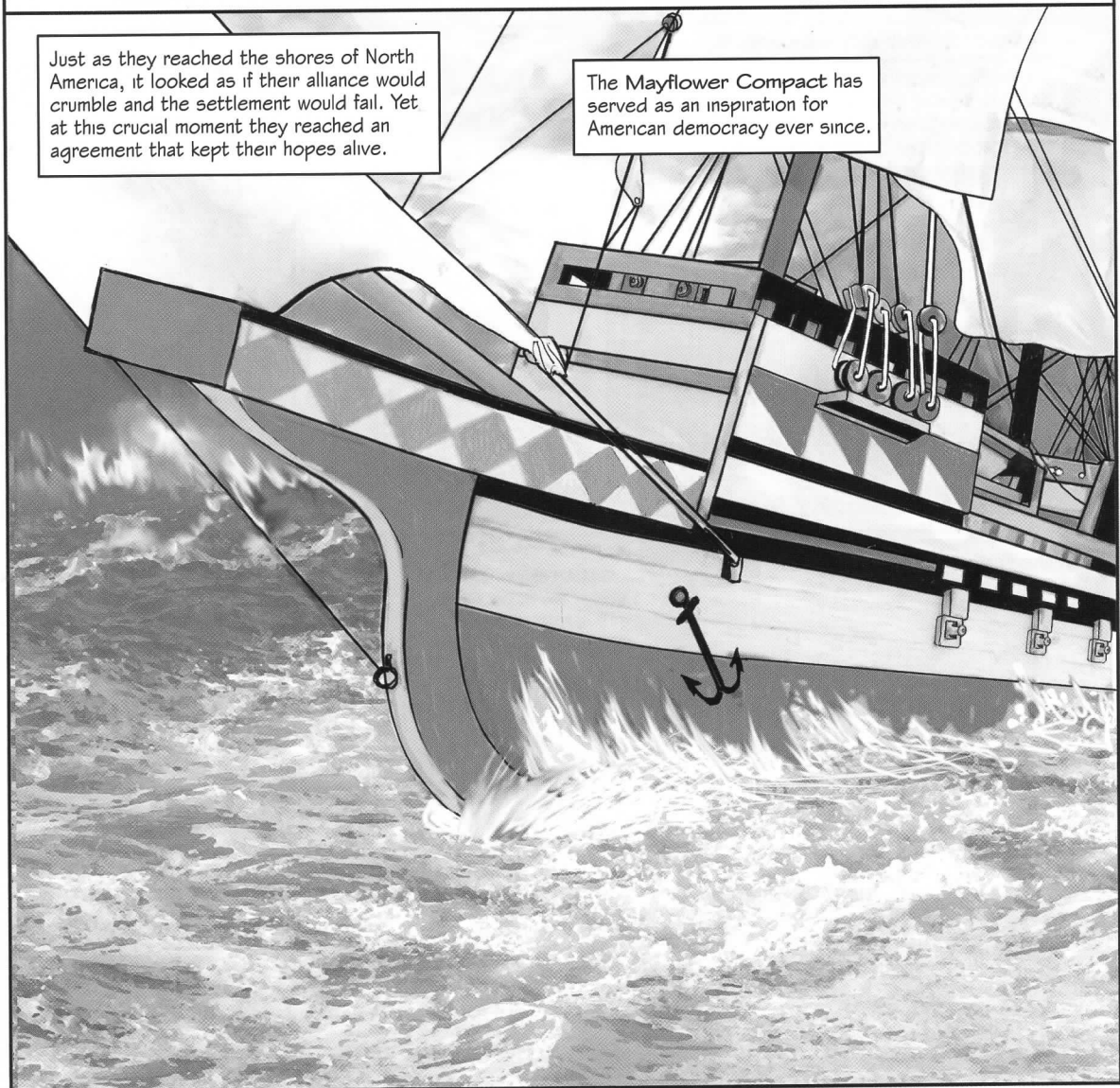


. . . and they were by no means united in a common purpose when they began the voyage.



Just as they reached the shores of North America, it looked as if their alliance would crumble and the settlement would fail. Yet at this crucial moment they reached an agreement that kept their hopes alive.

The *Mayflower Compact* has served as an inspiration for American democracy ever since.



## The court of King James I, 1604.

It was a time of religious turmoil throughout Europe. The English king, James I, was also head of his state's religion, Anglicanism, and he insisted that all English men and women join it.



But while some wanted to work to make the Anglican Church better, many others wanted nothing to do with it. The king was not pleased.

THESE SEPARATISTS HOLD SECRET MEETINGS AND DEFY YOUR LAWS, SIRE.

I WILL HAVE ONE RELIGION IN THIS COUNTRY. I SHALL MAKE THEM CONFORM THEMSELVES OR I SHALL HOUND THEM FROM THE LAND!



## The village of Scrooby, England, 1606.

William Brewster and others established a secret congregation of Separatists. They wished to practice their own form of Christianity rather than that dictated by the king.



OUR COVENANT IS WITH GOD.

AND WITH THIS COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS!

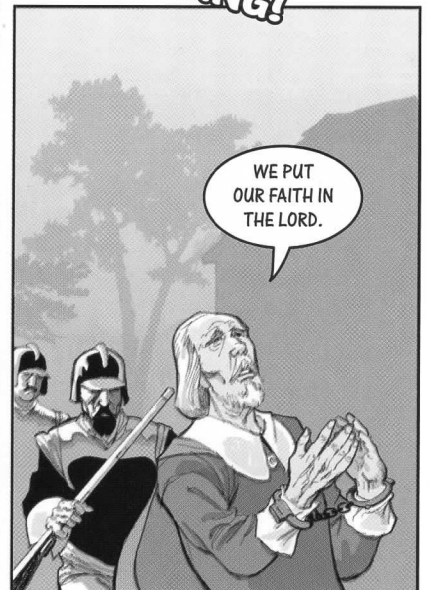


But the king's agents kept track of those who would defy his orders.

WILLIAM BREWSTER, I ARREST YOU IN THE NAME OF THE KING!



WE PUT OUR FAITH IN THE LORD.

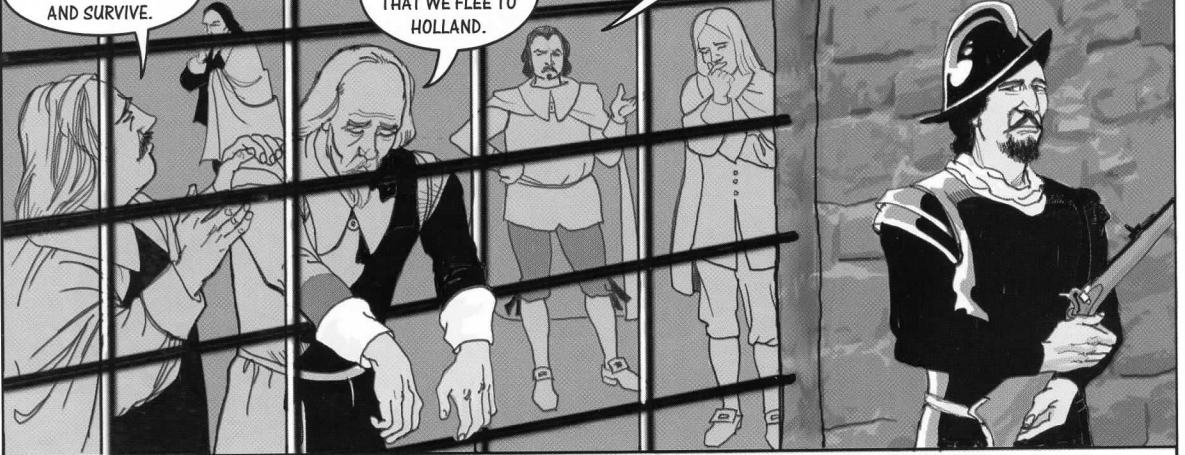


Among those Separatists imprisoned was young William Bradford, who would later lead the group.

WE CANNOT FIGHT THE KING'S RULE AND SURVIVE.

BRADFORD, PERHAPS 'TIS BEST THAT WE FLEE TO HOLLAND.

THERE WE CAN WORSHIP AS WE CHOOSE.



Leiden, Holland, 1609.

The Scrooby Separatists did indeed leave England. In Leiden, they found themselves poor laborers in a foreign city. They worked long hours spinning, weaving, and dyeing cloth. So did their children.

I FEAR OUR PEOPLE HAVE NO FUTURE IN HOLLAND.

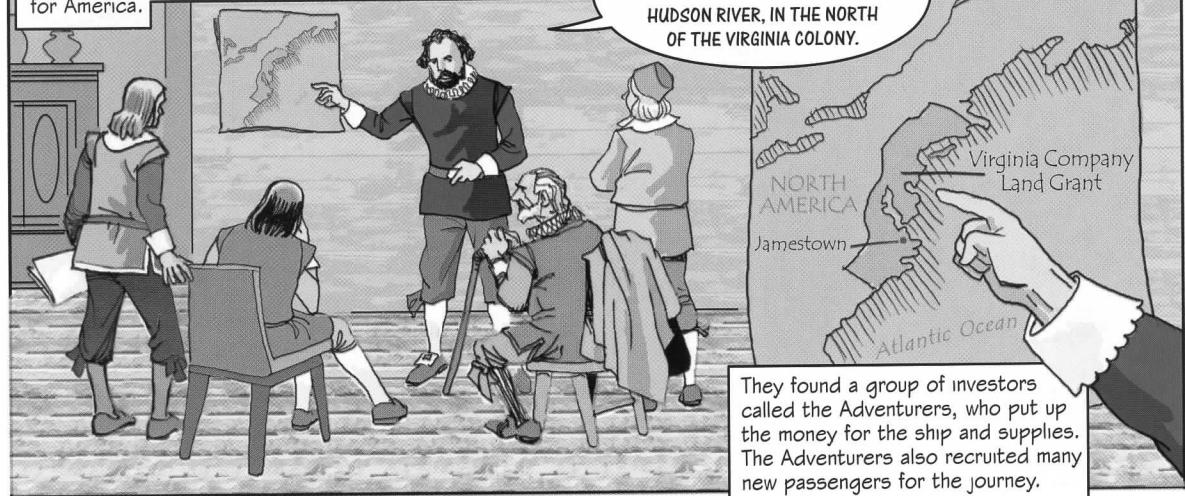
BUT WE CANNOT RETURN TO ENGLAND.

LET US GO, THEN, TO AMERICA. WE WILL BE PILGRIMS IN A NEW LAND.



By 1620, despite numerous attempts, the English had founded only one settlement in North America--Jamestown, in the Virginia Colony. King James, eager to exploit the territory, granted the Separatists permission to sail for America.

OUR CHARTER FROM THE VIRGINIA COMPANY IS FOR LAND NEAR THE MOUTH OF THE HUDSON RIVER, IN THE NORTH OF THE VIRGINIA COLONY.



They found a group of investors called the Adventurers, who put up the money for the ship and supplies. The Adventurers also recruited many new passengers for the journey.



The Adventurers hired a 100-foot merchant ship called the *Mayflower*. On board, the Separatists met their new shipmates.



MAKE WAY, THERE!

WATCH WHERE YOU ARE GOING!

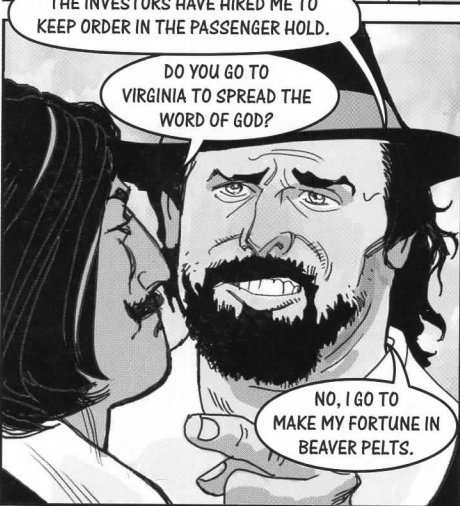
DON'T TAKE THAT TONE WITH ME, SIR. I AM CHRISTOPHER MARTIN, GOVERNOR OF THE MAYFLOWER.



MY NAME IS BRADFORD, SIR, AND WE HAVE ELECTED NO GOVERNOR.

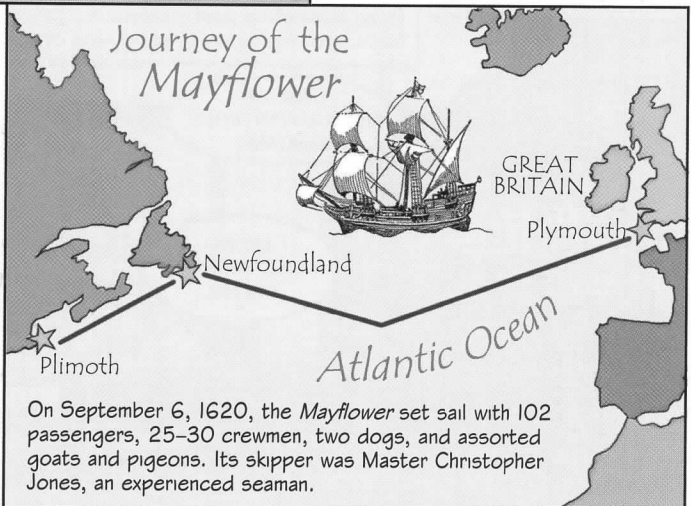
THE INVESTORS HAVE HIRED ME TO KEEP ORDER IN THE PASSENGER HOLD.

DO YOU GO TO VIRGINIA TO SPREAD THE WORD OF GOD?



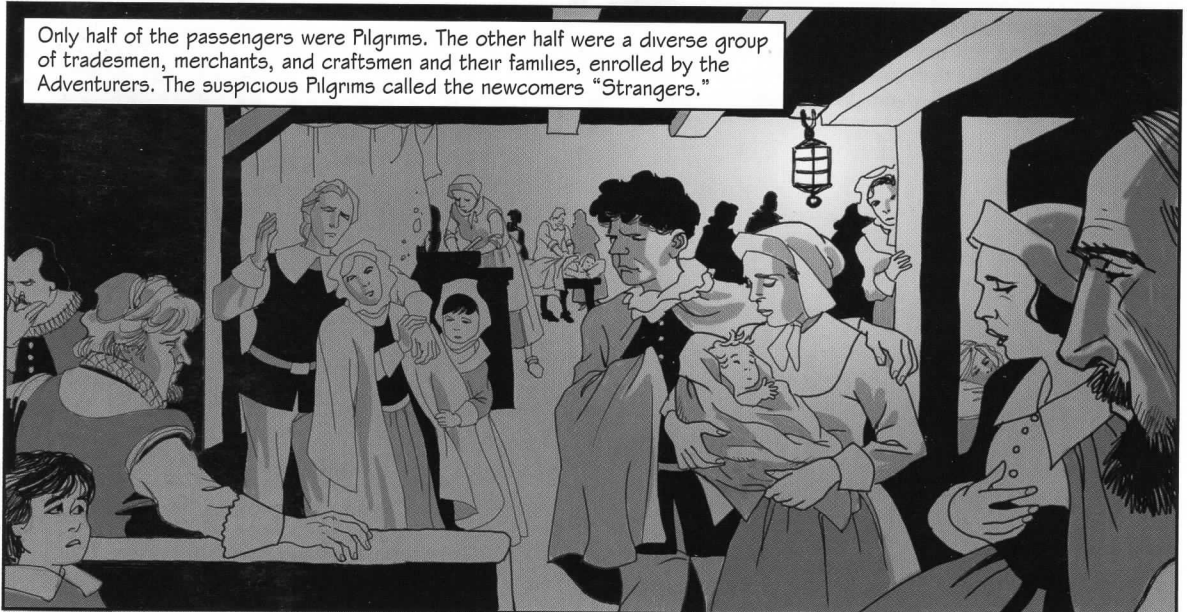
NO, I GO TO MAKE MY FORTUNE IN BEAVER PELTS.

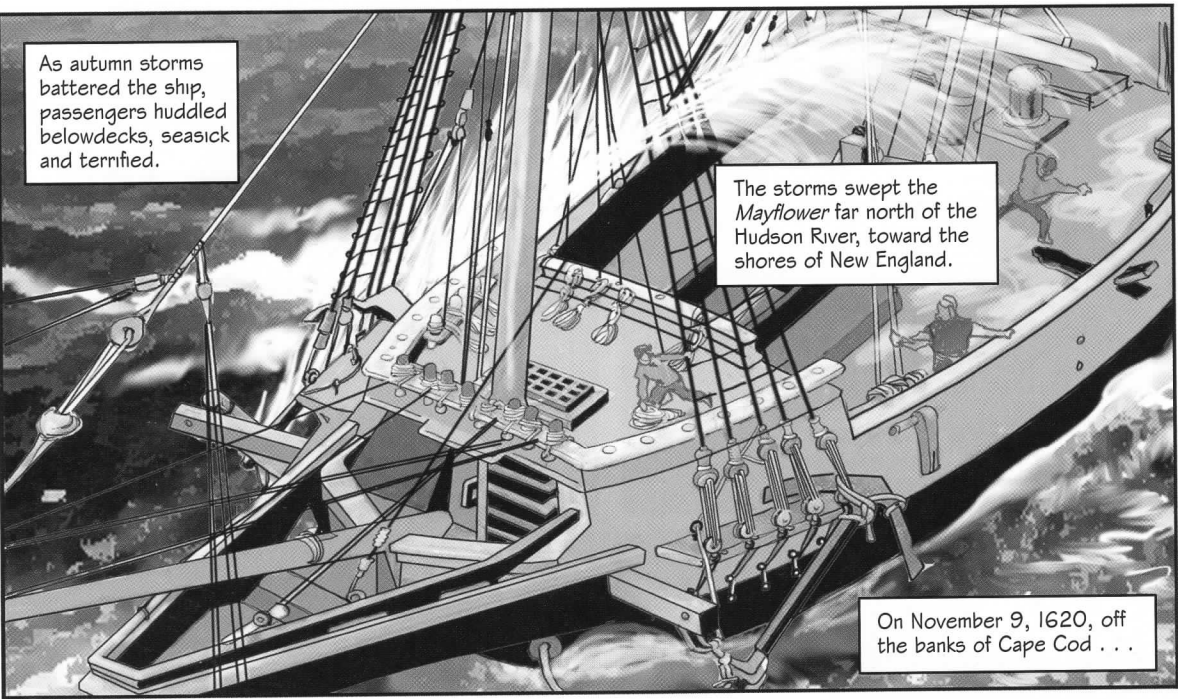
### Journey of the *Mayflower*



On September 6, 1620, the *Mayflower* set sail with 102 passengers, 25-30 crewmen, two dogs, and assorted goats and pigeons. Its skipper was Master Christopher Jones, an experienced seaman.

Only half of the passengers were Pilgrims. The other half were a diverse group of tradesmen, merchants, and craftsmen and their families, enrolled by the Adventurers. The suspicious Pilgrims called the newcomers "Strangers."





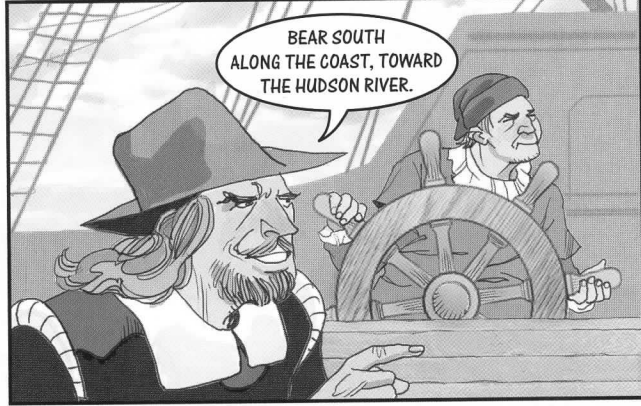
As autumn storms battered the ship, passengers huddled belowdecks, seasick and terrified.

The storms swept the *Mayflower* far north of the Hudson River, toward the shores of New England.

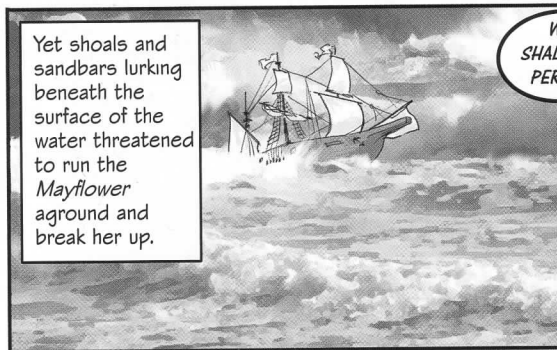
On November 9, 1620, off the banks of Cape Cod . . .



LAND HO!



BEAR SOUTH ALONG THE COAST, TOWARD THE HUDSON RIVER.



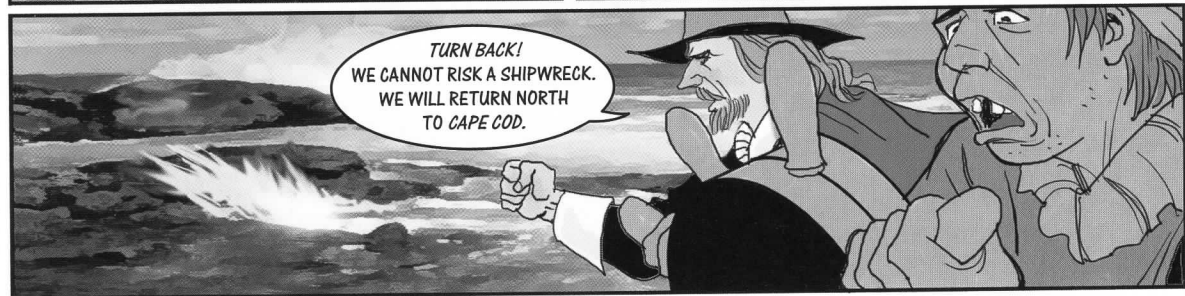
Yet shoals and sandbars lurking beneath the surface of the water threatened to run the *Mayflower* aground and break her up.



WE SHALL ALL PERISH!

ARE NOT WE CLOSE TO LAND?

THESE ARE RISKY WATERS, INDEED.



TURN BACK!  
WE CANNOT RISK A SHIPWRECK.  
WE WILL RETURN NORTH TO CAPE COD.

The news gravely concerned the Separatist passengers.

WE DO NOT HAVE PERMISSION TO LAND NORTH OF THE HUDSON RIVER. OUR CHARTER IS ONLY FOR VIRGINIA.

WE ARE ALL STILL BOUND BY THE LAWS OF GOD AND MAN.

The Strangers, however, saw potential in claiming new land.

NO EARTHLY LAWS WILL HAVE POWER TO COMMAND US IN NEW ENGLAND!

WE SHALL BE AT LIBERTY TO DO AS WE PLEASE.

ON UNCLAIMED LAND, WE SHALL BE OUR OWN MASTERS.

YOU ARE TALKING MUTINY!

YOU CANNOT DESERT US!

AND WHO WILL STOP US? YOU?

STAND ASIDE!

BRADFORD IS RIGHT. WE WILL HAVE NO MUTINY--ON SEA OR ON LAND.

LET US PUT ASIDE OUR DIFFERENCES. IF WE WORK AGAINST ONE ANOTHER, ALL SHALL PERISH.

WE MUST WRITE A COVENANT TO BIND US TOGETHER AND PREVENT REBELLION.

All that night, they labored to write the Mayflower Compact.



Mayflower Common Room, November 11, 1620.

The next morning, passengers gathered for the signing ceremony.

"...These present do covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil body politic..."



One by one, 41 men signed their names.



Later that day, the first group ventured ashore.



PRAISE GOD, WHO HAS DELIVERED US FROM THE VAST AND FURIOUS OCEAN.

A month later, the *Mayflower's* voyagers founded their colony at Plymouth Harbor. During the winter of 1620–21, more than half of the original settlers would die from hardship, starvation, and disease.

The local Indians taught the survivors what to eat and how to farm this new land. In autumn of 1621, Pilgrims and Indians came together for a harvest feast.

William Bradford served as governor of Plymouth Colony for 31 years. The colony also had a general court with representatives from various communities. Town meetings of male citizens would debate issues and try to resolve problems.



The model developed at Plymouth and other New England colonies would influence the formation of the United States government 150 years later.

At a moment of peril, when the Pilgrims and Strangers were facing an unfamiliar land full of mortal dangers, the Mayflower Compact bound them together in loyalty and obedience, mutual trust and respect.

It set an important precedent. Far from king and country, the first colonists in New England successfully made laws under which they could govern themselves. Just as important, nearly all adult males—wealthy, poor, master craftsmen, or servants—signed the compact. Thus all gave their approval—their consent—to their local government. Democracy is based on the consent of the governed.

The signers agreed to create a governing body of citizens, rather than be led by a religious or military authority. They gave the governmental leaders they chose the right to enact rules and laws for the well-being of everyone in the colony.

*The Mayflower Compact marks one of the first steps toward American democracy.*

### THE MAYFLOWER COMPACT

"We, whose names are written, . . . having undertaken for the glory of God and advancement of the Christian faith and honor of our King and country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the northern parts of Virginia, do by these presents solemnly and mutually in the presence of God and one of another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil body politic, for our better ordering and preservation, and furtherance of the ends aforesaid; and by virtue hereof to enact, constitute, and frame such just and equal laws, ordinances, acts, constitutions, and offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general good of the colony, unto which we promise all due submission and obedience."

