

# Wish You Were Here!

## Watch together: Teacher notes

The first part of the video is designed to establish the time and setting of the separatists who later became known as the pilgrim fathers.

The East Midlands was essentially a farming economy at the time and the majority of the separatists came from the middle and lower classes of society. Their clothing was the same as everyone else's. This is represented in the video by characters modelled on Speed's 1610 map of England where he illustrates Citizens (town dwellers) and Country men and women. The style of illustrations used in the video are based on 17<sup>th</sup> century woodcuts so that you may, if you wish, use contemporary illustrations and the pupils will see the connection with what they have already learned.

Note: The flag used in the map sequences and on the ships is typical of those used in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century for English military units such as companies of county soldiers (known as Trained Bands).

The houses illustrated are not quite the extreme end of the scale, timber and mud walled cottages were the homes of approximately two thirds of the population rather than just the poorest. Stone houses could be lived in by wealthy farmers, squires, knights and lords, and varied considerably in size.

A contemporary illustration of the battle of Gembloux (1578) has been chosen to illustrate the conflict in Europe at the time. This was a battle between Spain and an alliance of countries including England. Although complicated by the politics of the era, the Spanish were essentially Catholics fighting for the authority of Rome, and the alliance was Protestants and Catholics who questioned the authority of Rome.

William Brewster was born in 1564, probably in Scrooby, approximately 9 miles north of Worksop. There are no contemporary portraits of him, so a common early 20<sup>th</sup> century image representing him has been used. Such images usually show him in the fashions of the 1640s.

Contemporary illustrations have been used to show the Netherlands as it was at the time and the extent of religious persecution in England.

William Brewster was a religious non-conformist and a member of a group known as the Brownists. Their preacher was John Smyth who was notable at the time for not following the directions of the Church of England. It is an oversimplification to call all of these people Puritans as this covered a lot of different attitudes to either religion, life or both.

Because William had diplomatic experience, he was instrumental in the attempts of the separatists to escape England to the more sympathetic Holland. The first attempt was from Scotia Creek (near Boston Lincolnshire) in 1607. The second, successful attempt was from the Humber estuary in 1608.

The next section of the video makes a number of important points. The separatists did not remain in the first country they took refuge in. Economic and political circumstances caused them to move again in 1620.

The moving of the separatists to America was a huge undertaking involving diplomacy and the borrowing of enormous sums of money far out of reach of the separatists themselves. The king's desire to be rid of a group of political opponents moved things on, but even with huge loans the ships available were in a poor state and not really suitable for such a long sea crossing. There is debate about whether the speedwell was deliberately sabotaged, but both ships were leaking to some extent so it is possible that the vessel just wasn't sea worthy. In 1620 a list of supplies necessary for travelling and settling in America was published. This contained large quantities of food, minimum clothing requirements, and firearms for hunting and weapons and armour if possible. This shows that the separatists were prepared to establish their plantation by force if necessary.

The agreement with King James was that the Separatists would establish a plantation (colonial estate) in Virginia – and established English colony. However, the Mayflower had drifted off course and arrived at Cape Cod (then called Cape James) over 400 miles north.

The passengers were in a poor state and supplies were low. During the first winter, while they remained on the ship, they were ravaged by disease and nearly half died. In this context their actions while exploring can be seen as the result of desperation.

The next section is important as it established the point of view of the indigenous point of view. They were a stable, complex society with a vibrant culture, a constitution and had been living and farming on the land for hundreds of years. It is common for narratives to portray them as unclothed, uncivilised savages who only lived by hunting and fishing, but this is not true. Nor were they particularly warlike, as there was less conflict between nations in America at this time than there was in Europe.

As the Mayflower was off course the Separatists were beyond the jurisdiction of King James and English law. This meant that they risked conflict with other countries, and could not ask the king for military protection. It also meant that the Elders (most senior members of the group) did not have any legal authority. William Brewster's experience in diplomacy enabled them to solve this by drawing up a legal framework for establishing the plantation. This is variously known as the Mayflower covenant, or the Mayflower compact.

The houses that the Separatists built in Plymouth would have been the same as those they had lived in in England. Timber frames, mud walls and thatched roofs, the only differences being caused by the need to build quickly and the local materials available (that would have been local reeds and grass rather than straw, for example). Log cabins were not introduced into America until the arrival of northern European settlers in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Plantations were essentially enclosed colonies. They were first established in Ireland and followed a set pattern. The area would be cleared of any indigenous peoples, and then a fence of wooden stakes would enclose a square of land known as a yard. In the middle of this a house would be built. The first house would be for the governor of the plantation and would be the largest as it also doubled as a fort where the inhabitants of the plantation could fight off aggressive indigenous people. The Plymouth Plantation would have followed this pattern.

There are no contemporary images of Massasoit, and the image of him is based on a later engraving of his successor Metacomet, known as King Philip.

The Sachem's wampum belt was a significant cultural object for the Wampanoag - comparable to the Crown Jewels and Magna Carta.

Massasoit's decision to make peace is subject to much discussion (summed up well by Sachem Frank James WYWH8) but was pivotal to the survival of the plantation. Without his help the remaining separatists would have suffered from hunger, disease and fallen prey to other hostile tribes.

Thanksgiving as a national holiday in America is a relatively recent thing. Over the centuries there have been numerous 'Thanksgivings' as colonists have survived various threats to their lives. The Thanksgiving story told today is a simplified version of a number of events the main one being that the Separatists were giving thanks for their first harvest and fire guns in the air in celebration. The Wampanoag, believing their allies were being attacked took up arms and went to their aid, only to find it was a false alarm. To smooth things over they were included in the celebration meal which became something of a diplomatic dinner.

The significant elements of the Thanksgiving dinner are the foods that the Plymouth Plantation would have had in abundance. Wild turkeys were hunted, fish were caught and under instruction of the Wampanoag, corn, beans and squash (the three sisters) were cultivated.

The peace between the indigenous peoples and the colonists began to break down in the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. More colonists were arriving from England and Wampanoag territory was being violated by the enclosing of land and the building of colonists houses. There were also armed clashes between the two sides and in 1675 the colonists raised an army and attacked the Naragansett tribe. The Naragansett formed an alliance with the aggrieved Wampanoag and this resulted in three years of costly warfare. This is known as King Philip's war after the Wampanoag Sachem Metacomet.

In the centuries that followed the indigenous people of New England were either killed or forced off their lands and now only the county of Mashpee is reserved as their home out of the entire state. In recent years attempts have been made by developers to acquire that territory for construction.

The Wampanoag still exist, they are proud of their heritage but naturally feel that they have been treated unfairly. The creation of a new wampum belt is a significant political and cultural act in their fight to survive.