
Pilgrims: The Mayflower A Story Of Courage, Community, And War

The Mayflower a Story of Courage, Community, and War was written by the author Nathaniel Philbrick. Philbrick's motivation for writing this story was because of his curiosity on why Philip travelled such a long distance to reach his hometown, Nantucket. (Philbrick, P.xiii) Majority of Philbrick's sources are primary which include journals, reports, notes, letters, manuscripts, etc. Though Philbrick has his own personal reason on why he wrote this book, the focus of this story, is describing the history of the Pilgrims coming to America. It also traces key events that occurred besides Thanksgiving, and how some may affect today's lives.

From the very beginning the Pilgrims had a long and treacherous journey ahead of them. A factor that influenced their journey was the time that they began their voyage. By starting on the voyage on a later date than planned, the harsh winter was soon going to join them. With winter soon coming, they began to experience a decrease of supplies, which included firewood, water, and most importantly the beer. (Philbrick, P.3) They relied so much on beer, which made this journey much harder, due to the improper hygiene that came along with it, which included "bleeding gums, loosening teeth, and foul-smelling breath." (Philbrick, P.3) A major factor was the point of view that the Pilgrims had. They believed that the Church of England needed to start over, which was the reason for this journey. However, even after finding a place to settle, the settlers still faced issues.

An issue that the settlers of the Plymouth Plantation found was leadership. Even before landing, the settlers did not start off with a great leader. The very first captain the settlers had turned out to be a traitor and ended up in jail after leaving them. (Philbrick P.13) Another main leader that left a mark on the settlers, was William Bradford. He was elected as the first governor after the harsh winter passed on the colonists but was not as trustworthy as he seemed. He gave them hope and ended up destroying it by leaving the settlers in Holland and went back to England. However, he soon ran out of supplies and went back to Holland to gather more but ends up dying. For the Natives, tribes were always at war with one another, which portrayed having no order, or poor leadership. (Philbrick, P.112-113) After landing, they soon faced even more struggles with the natives already on the land.

When encountering the Natives, the Pilgrims did not leave a great first impression.

The Natives first saw the Pilgrims as a threat and were very aggressive towards them. Later, the Natives began to realize that the Pilgrims did not pose any danger onto them. Squanto helped in creating a truce between the two, by being a translator for the Natives. He cleared up any bad relations they had with the Pilgrims'. They soon created an agreement to have a truce between the two groups. As their relationships began to grow, the Natives started to teach the Pilgrims how to grow crops, while the Pilgrims started to trade with them. During this time, the Natives began to start relying on the foreign trade they had created. An example of some of the items they gained were, "iron hoes and kettles, blankets, liquor, or guns." (Philbrick, P.169) To reimburse all the luxurious goods they were gaining, the Natives returned fur to the Pilgrims, but soon the fur-bearing animals began to become scarce, so they had to give up land. Once exposed to these items the Pilgrims introduced, the Natives couldn't go back to their normal

ways before. However, the Pilgrims did not bring all good things for the Natives, especially when dealing with their land.

As the Pilgrims began leaving their mark onto the territory, they started to change the human ecology of the region. Due to Standish's raid, it destroyed the peaceful relationship between the Pilgrims and the Natives, which made all their trade relations practically disappear. That included the fur trade that so greatly influenced the Pilgrims economy, so they had to find another source. (Philbrick, P.155) The Pilgrims tried cold fishing in the region to replace how they gained their income. However, cold fishing turned out to be a disaster, and did not create the results needed. (Philbrick, P.155) The raid also induced fear into the Natives, which created a huge population decline. The influence of change that the Pilgrims had on the ecology, also affected the land distribution for the Natives.

At first, the Natives had all the land to themselves, but then the Pilgrims came and started to slowly take over. The Natives had the viewpoint as lands being for the community, so they were very willing to share the lands, once they trusted the Pilgrims. However, by giving them that access, they started to take advantage of it, and took over. It started with the trading, by providing them with resources for access to more of their land. With Natives relying so much on these items, they kept on giving away their land, so as time passed, they started to be taken over by the Pilgrims. However, the Natives began to realize the value of their lands, so they began to put contracts and agreements on the lands the Pilgrims tried to take. (Philbrick, P.192) While the Natives were slowly being dominated, the Pilgrims had started internally growing within the community.

Before the Pilgrims began to grow, they went through another hard time period. When John Robinson died, it caused fear onto the Pilgrims. (Philbrick, P.162) The origin of their fear related to if the purpose of going to America was going to be in danger or be in risk of being destroyed. (Philbrick, P.162) However, things began to change for the better slowly but surely when the Puritans started to arrive. They began changing the Pilgrims views and gave them a new light to follow. The Pilgrims would now become separatists which created the Puritans and Pilgrims bonds stronger and created a sort of unity. This unity helped the Pilgrims grow to be a stronger community and influence more settlers to join them even after all that they went through.

As a sign of growth, the Plymouth Colony created some form of government, which resided within the Mayflower Compact. The Mayflower Compact was an agreement between the settlers that allowed the Pilgrims to create and follow their own laws. (Mayflower Compact, P.57-58) As the government grew, a new generation began to form which included a different attitude toward their beliefs, that includes the decline in the belief of Christianity. (Philbrick, P.198) While the Old generation focused more on a strict religious stance and the separation from the Church of England, the New generation were very materialistic. They focused more on the profits they could gain to have a more prosperous economy. (Philbrick, P.198-199) Another attribute to this New generation was that they had little to no respect for the Natives, because they saw themselves as more superior. However, the final straw to complete this separation was drawn once King Phillip's war occurred.

King Phillip's war, also known as Metacomet's war, was the last chance for the Natives to get their land back and drive out the settlers. It resulted in the destruction of many of the Natives villages and did more harm than good. The destruction of land and the eradication of the relationship between the Natives ruined the trading they had with the French for furs. Besides

ruining the future of trade relations, King Phillip's war also failed in establishing religious freedom. Due to the Natives not having the same beliefs, point of view, as the settlers, when they were destroyed, there were no other views on the land that was different from the Pilgrims. (Philbrick, P.347)

To conclude, I believe that Philbrick achieved his goal by writing this book. Though his motivation for writing this story started off as something very small, it grew, and he went into detail about what the Pilgrims experienced. From the very beginning before getting to the land, to the end with King Phillip's war it caught my attention. As said in the preface, majority of people, including myself tend to disregard the history of Thanksgiving, and the holiday itself. This book unveiled all the lies I have been told in the past about Thanksgiving, and how in reality it was not all sunshine and rainbows like past teachers have told me. It also made me realize why there are not as many Native Americans present day in America, because of all the historical events that occurred, such as King Phillip's war. I would recommend this story to a friend, even though it takes a while to retain and understand the information, it will inform students how much history really impacts our present day lives, and that there is more to Thanksgiving then what one thinks.