

Name _____

Date _____

The Massachusetts Bay Colony

In the early seventeenth century, there were two types of Puritans: Separatist Puritans and non-Separatist Puritans. Separatist Puritans thought that English society was corrupt. They wanted to separate themselves from the corrupt society. They were unhappy with the Anglican Church and with the King. As a result, they fled to the New World. They established what they felt were ideal Christian communities in Plymouth, Salem, Dover, and Portsmouth.

Non-Separatist Puritans stayed in England. They thought that they could still reform the church from the inside. In 1603, James I became the new monarch. The non-Separatist Puritans hoped that he would be more sympathetic to their views because he was raised in Scotland, where Calvinism was popular. Even though James I was not sympathetic to their views, these Puritans still stayed in England and tried to work within the current system.

In 1629, James' son, King Charles I, dismissed Parliament. He also allowed the anti-Puritan Archbishop of Canterbury, William Laud, to tighten royal control over the church. He removed ministers with Puritan tendencies and threatened church elders who hid such ministers. Because of these changes, the non-Separatist Puritans no longer felt they could remain in England. They decided to migrate to the New World. They were still committed to reforming the Church of England and said that they did not want to separate from the church. They only wanted to separate themselves from the impurities in the Church of England.

A group of non-Separatist Puritans got a charter from King Charles I to form the Massachusetts Bay Company in 1629. The Massachusetts Bay Company was meant to be a business venture, but the colony was also used as a refuge for Puritans. In 1630, roughly 1,000 settlers arrived in 11 ships on the coast of Massachusetts. This was the largest group to immigrate to the New World at one time. About 16,000 to 20,000 settlers came to the New England region within the next ten years, in order to escape the turmoil in Britain. This movement came to be called "The Great Migration."

The Massachusetts colonists did not have as many hardships as the Jamestown and Plymouth settlers before them did. The colonists made careful preparations, and they also received a constant flow of new settlers. This helped them restock supplies and also caused the colony to grow. Many of the immigrants were well educated and their skills helped the Bay Company become successful. The land in the northeast was not suitable for farming, so the Bay Company focused on the forest and water resources instead. They made mills for grain and lumber. They also developed the fishing industry and used the wood from forests to build ships. The Massachusetts Bay Colony quickly became the largest and most influential colony in New England.

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The Massachusetts Bay Colony (Cont'd)

For several years, the Massachusetts Bay charter was used as a constitution for the Bay Company. Governmental power rested with the General Court, or the shareholders, who then elected the governor and his assistants. The right to vote and hold office was limited to male church members, called "freemen." The General Court had a structure that was similar to England's Parliament. It had two houses: the House of Assistants and the House of Deputies. The House of Assistants was similar to the House of Lords, and the House of Deputies was similar to the House of Commons. Each community also held town hall meetings to manage local affairs.

The Massachusetts Bay Colony elected their first governor before they even left England. John Winthrop was the first governor. He was a well-off English lawyer. Winthrop believed that he was called by God to lead them and that their venture to the New World was divinely inspired. He was governor for more than 10 years. His goal was to build a holy society that everyone else would also try to follow. Winthrop warned that their success would depend on their dedication to the idea of a selfless community. These convictions helped to shape the community of the Massachusetts Bay Colony in its early years.

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The Massachusetts Bay Colony Questions

Multiple Choice:

1. The anti-Puritan Archbishop of Canterbury that tightened royal control over the church was:
 - a. Francis Greene
 - b. Thomas Merton
 - c. Perry Wycliffe
 - d. William Laud
2. The first governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony was:
 - a. Winston Churchill
 - b. John Winthrop
 - c. William Laud
 - d. Francis Drake
3. The right to vote and hold office was limited to male church members called:
 - a. freemen
 - b. assistants
 - c. archbishops
 - d. deacons

Fill In:

4. In the early seventeenth century, there were two types of Puritans: _____ Puritans and _____ Puritans.
5. In 1629, King James' son, _____, dismissed Parliament.
6. Governmental power in the Bay Company rested with the _____.
7. The General Court had a structure that was similar to England's _____.

True or False:

- ___ 8. Winthrop believed that he was called by God to lead the Massachusetts Bay Colony and that their venture to the New World was divinely inspired.
- ___ 9. The House of Assistants was similar to England's House of Commons.
- ___ 10. The Separatist Puritans were unhappy with the Anglican Church and with the King.

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The Massachusetts Bay Colony Answers

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