



The Pilgrims at Plymouth: The First Sermon Ashore, 1621, c. 1800s. Jean Leon Gerome Ferris.

from **Of Plymouth
Plantation**

by William Bradford

So they committed themselves to the will
of God and resolved to proceed.

Book I, Chapter IX. Of Their Voyage and How They Passed the Sea; and of Their Safe Arrival at Cape Cod

September 6. These troubles¹ being blown over, and now all being compact together in one ship, they put to sea again with a prosperous wind, which continued divers days together, which was some encouragement unto them; yet, according to the usual manner, many were afflicted with seasickness. And I may not omit here a special work of God's providence. There was a proud and very pro-fane young man, one of the seamen, of a lusty,² able body, which made him the more haughty; he would always be condemning the poor people in their sickness and cursing them daily with grievous execrations;³ and did not let⁴ to tell them that he hoped to help to cast half of them overboard before they came to their journey's end, and to make merry with what they had; and if he were by any gently reprov'd, he would curse and swear most bitterly. But it pleased God before they came half seas over, to smite this young man with a grievous disease, of which he died in a desperate manner, and so was himself the first that was thrown overboard. Thus his curses light on his own head, and it was an astonishment to all his fellows for they noted it to be the just hand of God upon him.

After they had enjoyed fair winds and weather for a season, they were encountered many times with cross winds and met with many fierce storms with which the ship was shroudly⁵ shaken, and her upper works made very leaky; and one of the main beams in the midships was bowed and cracked, which put them in some fear that the ship could not be able to perform the voyage. So some of the chief of the company, perceiving the mariners to fear the sufficiency of the ship as appeared by their mutterings, they entered into serious consultation with the master and other officers

of the ship, to consider in time of the danger, and rather to return than to cast themselves into a desperate and inevitable peril. And truly there was great distraction and difference of opinion amongst the mariners themselves; fain⁶ would they do what could be done for their wages' sake (being now near half the seas over) and on the other hand they were loath to hazard their lives too desperately. But in examining of all opinions, the master and others affirmed they knew the ship to be strong and firm under water; and for the buckling of the main beam, there was a great iron screw the passengers brought out of Holland, which would raise the beam into his place; the which being done, the carpenter and master affirmed that with a post put under it, set firm in the lower deck and otherways bound, he would make it sufficient. And as for the decks and upper works, they would caulk them as well as they could, and though with the working of the ship they would not long keep staunch,⁷ yet there would otherwise be no great danger, if they did not overpress her with sails. So they committed themselves to the will of God and resolved to proceed. In sundry of these storms the winds were so fierce and the seas so high, as they could not bear a knot of sail, but were forced to hull⁸ for divers days together. And in one of them, as they thus lay at hull in a mighty storm, a lusty young man called John Howland, coming upon some occasion

1. **troubles.** Another vessel, the *Speedwell*, had proved unseaworthy and everything was transferred to the *Mayflower*.

2. **lusty.** Strong; energetic

3. **execrations.** Curses

4. **let.** Hesitate

5. **shroudly.** Shrewdly, meaning wickedly

6. **fain.** Gladly

7. **staunch.** Watertight

8. **hull.** Drift with the wind with short sails

pro • fane (prō fan') *adj.*, blasphemous, irreverent; not devoted to religion or religious ends

haugh • ty (hō' tē) *adj.*, disdainfully or contemptuously proud



which was William Butten, a youth, servant to Samuel Fuller, when they drew near the coast.

But to omit other things (that I may be brief) after long beating at sea they 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. After some deliberation had amongst themselves and with the master of the ship, they tacked¹¹ about and resolved to stand for the southward (the wind and weather being fair) to find some place about Hudson's River for their habitation. But after they had sailed that course about half the day, they fell amongst dangerous shoals and roaring breakers, and they were so far entan-

above the gratings was, with a seele⁹ of the ship, thrown into sea; but it pleased God that he caught hold of the topsail halyards¹⁰ which hung overboard and ran out at length. Yet he held his hold (though he was sundry fathoms under water) till he was hauled up by the same rope to the brim of the water, and then with a boat hook and other means got into the ship again and his life saved. And though he was something ill with it, yet he lived many years after and became a profitable member both in church and commonwealth. In all this voyage there died but one of the passengers,

gled therewith as they conceived themselves in great danger; and the wind shrinking upon them withal, they resolved to bear up again for the Cape and thought themselves happy to get out of those dangers before night overtook them, as by God's good providence they did. And the next day they got into Cape Harbor¹² where they rid in safety. ❖

9. **seele.** Roll

10. **halyards.** Rope for raising and lowering a sail

11. **tacked.** Change course against the wind

12. **Cape Harbor.** The ship arrived in Cape Harbor, now known as Provincetown Harbor, on November 11, 1620, sixty-five days after leaving England.

1. Which of the following statements best explains why Powhatan dresses himself in his "greatest braveries," as described by John Smith in "The General History of Virginia"?
 - A. He wants to impress and intimidate Smith.
 - B. He wants to appear handsome for his queen.
 - C. He wants to demonstrate his wealth to Smith.
 - D. He is preparing to engage in battle.
 - E. He is going to participate in a tribal ceremony he wants Smith to observe.
2. In *The General History of Virginia*, Smith describes the men being fed a mixture of wheat and barley that "contained as many worms as grains so that we might truly call it rather so much bran than corn." Given the tone of the selection, how did Smith likely mean for this to be interpreted?
 - A. as humorous
 - B. as persuasive
 - C. as exaggerated
 - D. as strictly factual
 - E. as poetically descriptive
3. In this line from *The General History of Virginia*—"our President would never have been admitted for engrossing to his private"—what does the word *engrossing* mean?
 - A. absorbing
 - B. collecting
 - C. largely copying
 - D. preparing a document
 - E. taking one's whole attention
4. Which of the following phrases from *The General History of Virginia* means the same as "after their manner," as used near the end of the second complete paragraph on page 38?
 - A. "according to their composition"
 - B. "notwithstanding, within an hour after"
 - C. "in a triumphant manner"
 - D. "when no entreaty could prevail"
 - E. "by His divine providence"
5. Smith and the other colonists were miserable after the ships left them in Virginia for all the following reasons *except* which one?
 - A. They did not have enough good food.
 - B. They had only water to drink.
 - C. They slept outside.
 - D. They were not prepared for the summer heat.
 - E. They had hard work to do.

6. Which of the following is a *true* statement about events aboard the *Mayflower*, as described by Bradford in "Of Plymouth Plantation"?
- A. Unlike the colonists in Jamestown, the passengers on the *Mayflower* never tried to convince others to sail back to England.
 - B. Starvation and scurvy resulted in several deaths among the passengers.
 - C. The majority of the passengers actually wanted to head for the Hudson River.
 - D. John Howland was saved when he fell overboard but died later in a tragic accident while landing near Plymouth Rock.
 - E. The passengers threw overboard a rude young man who taunted them when they were ill.
7. Which of the following events is *not* something Bradford attributes to "God's providence"?
- A. The "profane young man" comes down with a fatal disease.
 - B. John Howland is saved.
 - C. The ship avoids the dangerous shoals and makes its way back to Cape Harbor.
 - D. The "great iron screw" helps the carpenter to raise the beam.
 - E. The *Mayflower* is substituted for the *Speedwell*.
8. What point or points of view are used in these selections?
- A. first-person in both
 - B. second-person in both
 - C. third-person in both
 - D. first-person and third-person in *The General History of Virginia* and primarily third-person in *Of Plymouth Plantation*
 - E. third-person in *The General History of Virginia* and primarily first-person in *Of Plymouth Plantation*
9. **Constructed Response:** The details of John Smith's capture are not entirely clear. Use inductive reasoning to identify evidence from the excerpt that can be used to infer that the Native Americans singled him out for capture. Use deductive reasoning to identify information from other sources (such as articles about Native American culture) that might explain why they would have done this.
10. **Constructed Response:** Compare and contrast the hardships suffered by the colonists of Jamestown and Plymouth. How did the leadership by Smith and Bradford affect the outcome for their respective groups?

Reading Assessment

1. A. Model how to evaluate the possible responses to this question by saying, "All of the answer options seem plausible. Answer B can be eliminated, however, because the interactions between Powhatan and his queen are not discussed. Answers D and E both bring up events that Smith either does not mention (war) or would not understand (tribal ceremony). It seems more likely that Powhatan was dressing that way intentionally for Smith. Since Smith initially was going to be killed, answer A seems the most likely."
2. C
3. E
4. A
5. C
6. E
7. E
8. D
9. Evidence includes Smith's claim that the Native Americans discovered from George Cassen when Smith would be away from the colony, and "prosecuting that opportunity they followed him with three hundred bowmen" and captured him when he was on an expedition. The text also supports the hypothesis that the Native Americans were familiar with his leadership and survival skills, as well as other skills that would be useful to them.
10. The Jamestown colonists had to endure being at sea for five months with food for only two, having bad food when they were