

The *Mayflower*



Mayflower in Plymouth Harbor by William Halsall (1882)

Read this account of the Pilgrim's journey to the New World. Then answer the questions on page 2.

You may have heard of the *Mayflower* as the ship the Pilgrims took to reach the New World. But what else do you know about the *Mayflower's* famous voyage to the New World?

In fact, two ships—the *Mayflower* and the *Speedwell*—set sail for the New World in July of 1620. The ships had to return to shore twice because the *Speedwell* kept leaking. After deciding that the *Speedwell* could not make the journey, the settlers all boarded the *Mayflower* and embarked on their voyage. The third time was the charm. The *Mayflower* arrived in North America a few months later.

Taking a journey by sea in 1620 wasn't like it is today. Most ships were designed for transporting cargo, not people. So, ships were generally cramped and uncomfortable for people to live in during a sea journey. It could take weeks, or even months, to arrive at a final destination. Plus, there

were many dangers. Ships could be attacked by pirates, and ship construction wasn't as safe as it is now—shipwrecks were not unusual. In fact, the *Mayflower* was damaged in a storm on the way to North America. Luckily, the people on board were able to repair the damage.

After two months at sea, the *Mayflower* arrived at what is now Cape Cod, Massachusetts. However, the passengers couldn't get off just yet. They needed to find a place to live. While a small team of Pilgrims looked for an area of land that had good weather and soil fertile enough to grow food, the rest of the settlers lived on the ship for several more weeks. Once the team identified a good place to settle, the ship sailed up the coast to Plymouth, where the Pilgrims began building a town. Most of the group continued to live on the ship until around March of 1621, when there were enough houses built for everyone to get settled in Plymouth.

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Answer each question.

1. Why was it necessary for the *Mayflower* to turn back two times before its full journey began?
- a. English officials kept ordering the ship to come back so they could arrest several Pilgrims on board.
 - b. The first time, the ship had a faulty rudder that needed repairs. The second time, the Pilgrims realized they did not have enough food for the journey and came back for additional supplies.
 - c. The boat sailing alongside the *Mayflower* was leaking. After two attempts to fix it, they decided to sail without a second boat.
 - d. The *Mayflower* was too small, so they went back twice to find a larger ship and eventually set sail on the *Speedwell* instead.

2. List three typical characteristics of sea travel in the 1600s.
- 1. _____
 - 2. _____
 - 3. _____

3. How long was the *Mayflower's* voyage at sea? _____

4. Where did the *Mayflower* finally land?
- a. Off the coast of Newfoundland
 - b. Near present-day London, England
 - c. Near present-day Cape Cod, Massachusetts
 - d. Off the coast of Europe

5. Why was it necessary for some passengers to live on the docked ship for several weeks when the *Mayflower* first arrived?
- _____
- _____
- _____