

WAMPANOAG

people of the dawn

THE WAMPANOAG ARE A NATIVE AMERICAN tribe from what is now Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut. When the Pilgrims arrived in 1620, these were the people living in the land they settled.

The Pilgrims, however, were not the first Europeans they had met. In the 1500s, traders and merchants traveling the Atlantic would often raid their villages, taking some as slaves. A man named Squanto was one of those taken, but his experience was different. He was bought by a group of Spanish monks who wanted to change his religion. After years of no success he was set free – something most didn't experience. When he returned to his village, nearly all of his people had died from sickness, thought to be smallpox brought by European visitors.

Though most outsiders were not very kind, the Pilgrims were actually quite peaceful and respectful to the Wampanoag. The Pilgrims respected their culture and the Wampanoag helped them learn about the new land they now called home. Unfortunately, the Wampanoag soon became ill through contact with the Pilgrims.

Before the Pilgrims arrived, the Wampanoag had a rich culture, living off the bountiful sea and fertile land in the region. Each village had a leader, often a woman, and power was passed down through the mother's side of a family. When the Pilgrims came, many of the Wampanoag got sick and could not defend themselves against the settlers that continued to arrive. Many of the new settlers were much less respectful than the Pilgrims, and they soon outnumbered the Wampanoag.

In 1675 the Wampanoag and other tribes tried to take back their home by attacking the colonial villages. There was some success at first but the colonists greatly outnumbered the Wampanoag and they were eventually defeated. The Wampanoag tribe continued to lose power and independence from then on. The colonists kept coming and using more land, and the Wampanoag were slowly forced onto smaller and smaller reservations.

The tribe still exists today on reservations in Massachusetts. People have tried to bring back the original Wampanoag language, independence and way of life, and to educate others about the tribe's history.



An illustration by Paul Revere of the Wampanoag leader 'King Philip', who led the war against the colonists. The image was meant to stir up colonists against 'King Philip'.

Wampanoag questions

1. Who would be in charge of a Wampanoag family?

- a. The grandparents
- b. The father
- c. The mother

2. How were the Pilgrims different from other Europeans that the Wampanoag had met?

*Below is a map of modern-day New England. Color the states in which the Wampanoag lived **blue**. Color the states in which they did not live in **green**.*

