

Mayflower Compact Analysis

Name:

Period:

Vocabulary

Dread- causing great fear

Sovereign- ruler, king

Grace- undeserved help from God

Undertaken- having taken upon oneself

Solemnly- seriously

Mutually- acting together in common

Covenant- pledge

Civil body politic- the people organized as a nation

Furtherance- the act of advancing

Aforesaid- previously mentioned

By virtue (of)- by reason (of)

Hereof- of this

Ordinances- commands by an authority

Submission- the act of giving in to the power of another

Whereof- of what

Subscribed- signed one's name

Reign- period during which a king rules

Anno Dom.— short for Anno Domini, "in the year of our Lord"

Comprehension Questions

1. According to the Mayflower Compact, what was the purpose of the voyage?
2. Where were the voyagers intending to land? Where did they end up?
3. What do the signers promise?
4. When was the compact signed?
5. What was the gender of the signers?

The Mayflower Compact

Document: The Mayflower Compact (1620)

Historical Context

The situation called for action. The *Mayflower*, a British ship, had carried 102 passengers across the Atlantic Ocean. They had traveled 3,000 miles only to land north of their destination. They had hoped to begin a colony at the mouth of the Hudson River, the site of today's New York City. This would have placed the colony within the geographic boundaries the king outlined in the Virginia Company of Plymouth's charter. This group of businessmen invested money to start the colony. In return they hoped to profit from the products of the New World. The company's charter outlined how the settlement would be governed. But the *Mayflower's* passengers had drifted outside the charter's boundaries. Now they were off the tip of Cape Cod on November 9, 1620, with no laws to govern them. The passenger list showed that the colonists needed to create a government.

- About one third was a group later called Pilgrims, the organizers of the colony. They had separated from the Church of England over religious differences. The Pilgrims had lived for a time in Holland. Now they hoped to make a new start.
- The rest of the passengers were skilled workers and servants who sought a new life. They were members of the Church of England. The Pilgrims called them "Strangers."

Pilgrim William Bradford wrote about what happened. As the *Mayflower* neared shore, its passengers realized they were outside of the area covered by the charter. Arguments began among the "Strangers" and Pilgrims. Clearly, a temporary government was needed. One of the Pilgrims drew up an agreement, or compact. It was later called the Mayflower Compact because passengers signed it while still on board the *Mayflower*. It was based on the way the Pilgrims governed their church. Every male head of household and male bachelor, as well as three male servants, signed the compact on November 11, 1620. The signers pledged to obey any laws agreed to by the majority.

Later, the ship's passengers settled in a more sheltered harbor in today's Massachusetts for their permanent colony. Called Plymouth, it was the first New England colony. In the first couple of years about one half of the original colonists died of starvation and disease, even with the help of the Indians. But the colony survived, and its people worked together.

Importance

It was not until after the American Revolution that the Mayflower Compact received much attention. At this time the new nation began looking back to the roots of its self-government. Today, the compact is often viewed as the first example of American democracy, a social contract. But it is also understood that the idea came from the practical need for unity to survive in the wilderness.

The Mayflower Compact (1620)

In the name of God Amen. We, whose names are underwritten, the loyal subjects of our dread sovereign Lord King James by the grace of God, of Great Britain, France, and Ireland king, defender of the Faith, etc.

Having undertaken, for the glory of God, and advancement of the Christian faith and honour of our king and country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the northern parts of Virginia. Do by these presents solemnly and mutually in the presence of God, and one of another, covenant and combine our selves together into a civil body politic; for our better ordering, and preservation and furtherance of the ends aforesaid; and by virtue hereof to enact, constitute, and frame such just and equal laws, ordinances, acts, constitutions and offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general good of the Colony: unto which we promise all due submission and obedience. In witness whereof we have hereunder subscribed our names at Cape Cod, the 11 of November, in the year of the reign of our sovereign Lord King James of England, France, and Ireland the eighteenth and of Scotland the fifty-fourth. Anno Dom. 1620.

John Carver	Richard Warren	Thomas Williams
William Bradford	John Howland	Gilbert Winslow
Edward Winslow	Steven Hopkins	Edmond Margeson
William Brewster	Edward Tilly	Peter Brown
Isaac Allerton	John Tilly	Richard Bitteridge
Miles Standish	Francis Cook	Richard Clark
John Alden	Thomas Rogers	Richard Gardiner
Samuel Fuller	Thomas Tinker	John Allerton
Christopher Martin	John Rigdale	Thomas English
William Mullins	Edward Fuller	Edward Doten
William White	John Turner	Edward Liester
James Chilton	Francis Eaton	John Goodman
John Craxton	Moses Fletcher	George Soule
John Billington	Digery Priest	