US History: The Pilgrim Fathers

3 Read the text and answer the questions.

Europeans arrive in America

Early Europeans exploration of America

When Christopher Columbus landed in America in 1492, he thought that he was in India. He called the local people ‘Indians’, and people used that name to describe them for hundreds of years. Today, we call these original inhabitants of North America ‘Native Americans’. In the 16th century, British and Dutch traders travelled to the east coast of America and built settlements. They went there to make money and to look for gold.
The Pilgrim Fathers leave England

The official religion of England in the 17th century was the Church of England. A religious group called the Puritans wanted to separate from the Church of England and to practise their religion in a different way. They were treated badly in England because of their beliefs, and sometimes they were put in prison. A group of Puritans decided to move to America to start a new life. On 16th September 1620, they left Plymouth, in England. They sailed to the east coast of America in a ship called the Mayflower. Today we call this group of 102 people ‘The Pilgrim Fathers’.

Glossary

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settlements insediamenti
The Pilgrim Fathers I Padri Pellegrini

1 Why did Columbus call the Native American people ‘Indians’?
2 Why did British and Dutch people go to America in the 16th century?
3 Why did the English Puritans decide to move to America?
4 When did they leave England?
The Pilgrim Fathers arrive in America

It was a difficult voyage, and some people died at sea, but on 21st November they landed in America. The Pilgrims signed a document called the Mayflower Compact. They agreed to follow certain rules and to work together to make a new community in the area that is now called Massachusetts. The first winter was very hard, and unfortunately only half of the settlers survived.

Peaceful contact with the Native Americans

The settlers met the native Wampanoag people. Some of the Native Americans knew the English language because of their contact with early traders. The Pilgrims and the Wampanoag signed a peace treaty. The Native Americans helped the settlers to fish and to plant new crops. In 1621, when the settlers’ first harvest was a success, they invited the Wampanoag to celebrate with them.

Glossary

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5 When did they arrive in America?
6 Why did some of them die in their first year in America?
7 Who were the Wampanoag?
8 How did the Wampanoag help the Pilgrims?