

RE lessons for Mayflower 400

2020 marks the 400th anniversary of the voyage of the Mayflower and this document sets out four RE lessons for KS1 and 2 to connect with themes from this historic event. Making the perilous journey to America was a group of about 100 puritans. They were fleeing from the persecution they experienced in 17th Century England, seeking a better life in the New World. They became known as the Pilgrims Fathers and they have a very special place in the history of modern America.



The pilgrims held strong religious beliefs and they experienced significant discrimination because they refused to accept many of the laws in England at the time. Some had been imprisoned for their beliefs and a few had even been executed. They believed that the Bible sets out clear teachings on how we should live, and that the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church had failed to follow this God-given guidance in many different ways. When James 1 came to the throne in the early 1600s he banned all private Christian services and made it a crime not to belong to the Church of England. There was no freedom of religion and many were forced to leave their churches and meet secretly, holding illegal services.

The Pilgrim Fathers were part of a larger reform movement called Puritanism, which sought to 'purify' the Church. The Puritans believed that people should live according to the laws given by God through the Christian scriptures. They disagreed with the Church of England, but continued to live according to the laws of the country. The Pilgrim Fathers were different; they were separatists. They believed that it was not possible to live a good life under English laws, so they needed to find a new home where they were free to live the way they believed God wanted them to.

These teaching units aim to help pupils gain an understanding of:

- what the Mayflower journey stood for
- the way in which beliefs can make an impact on people's lives
- how our beliefs and values have changed, creating a more inclusive society

The lessons will enable pupils to discuss the significance of British values in our lives today

Background information: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/47688.stm>

Session 1: Journey

Background: look at the route Pilgrim Fathers took (eg via Holland and Plymouth)

Locate Plymouth (UK) and New England (USA) on a map

Watch a short video about the journey

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w59TkoL-tZY>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2oO2N-5t9II>

KS1: plot journey of Mayflower

KS2: identify who the pilgrims were, write a series of log entries for the journey, work out distance travelled

Plenary: What were the conditions like on the journey and when they arrived in New England?

Session 2: Persecution

Why would you take a big journey (reasons, conditions etc)

Discuss the risks and the benefits of the journey made by the Pilgrim Fathers.

What is persecution¹?

What were the main reasons for the Pilgrim Fathers having to leave England?

KS1: as a class, mind map ideas

KS2: as pairs and feedback

Create ppt with basic info about persecution

Video: pilgrim fathers animated for kids

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2oO2N-5t9II>

There is more detailed background info here on the reasons the Pilgrims had to leave:

<https://owlcation.com/humanities/Why-Did-the-Puritans-Really-Leave-England-For-The-New-World>

Session 3: Respect and tolerance

Discuss the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect for and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs and for those without faith.

Some key questions which arise:

- Did King James 1 show respect and tolerance towards the Puritans?
- Did people in 17th C society have respect and tolerance for all faiths and beliefs?
- Did people in England at the time have the freedom to express and live out their own beliefs?
- Could people in England vote for their own government?
- Who should make the laws which govern how we live?
- Were the Pilgrims free to leave the country to search for a better place to live?
- Would you obey a law if it went against your strongly held beliefs?

KS1: when individuals wear their favourite t-shirt, are differences always respected?

Images: diverse dress and cultures, mis-treating others etc; how could we show respect for others who hold different religious or non-religious beliefs?

KS2: How do we judge others?

Hijab image: Judge me by what's in my head, not what's on it.

<https://www.beatfreeks.com/blogs/judge-me-by-what-is-in-my-head-not-by-what-is-on-it>

<http://crystaltudor.blogspot.com/2015/03/judge-me-by-whats-in-my-head-not-whats.html>

<https://narratively.com/thats-my-hijab/>

Session 4: Thanksgiving

What would you say thank-you for in your life?

What did the Pilgrim Fathers have to say thank-you for?

¹ **Persecution** is the mistreatment (bad treatment) of an individual or group by another group. People can be persecuted for any reasons; it is usually because of their [religion](#), [ethnicity](#), [politics](#), or [gender](#).

[Religious persecution](#) originally meant chasing after people of a religion in order to kill them all. Nowadays it often just means [discrimination](#).

The first Thanksgiving feast lasted 3 days and was held in the presence of around ninety Wampanoag Indians.

How are the events of the Pilgrim Fathers remembered every year on Thanksgiving Day?

Video: Pilgrims, Mayflower, Thanksgiving History

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OBjqrKyfRnA>

Drawing out what to be thankful for? How do people in different religions say thanks in different ways:

Christmas (Christianity), Eid-ul-Fitr (Islam), Diwali (Hinduism/Sikhism), Buddha Day/ Wesak/ Vaisakha (Buddhism)

Useful resources:

Video: The Story of the Mayflower and the First Thanksgiving for Children: History for Kids

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=brqlER2KHbE>

Why the Pilgrim Fathers left England

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/47688.stm>

The religious motivation of the Pilgrims

<https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/1957/08/religious-motivation-of-the-mayflower-pilgrims>

Video: short history of the Pilgrim Fathers

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2oO2N-5t9II>

The Voyage of the Mayflower

<http://mayflowerhistory.com/voyage>

A story of the Pilgrims for kids and a brief history of Pilgrims and the first Thanksgiving

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OBjqrKyfRnA>

Documentary on the Pilgrim's Journey

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fNNKGAYbe08>

What is persecution?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yKYG5XwnRQ0>