**History file. English Puritans in America**

**The first Stuart king.** When Queen Elizabeth died in 1603 without leaving a direct heir, the throne of England went to James VI of Scotland. He became the first of the Stuart kings of England, ruling both countries as James VI of Scotland and James I (1603-25) of England. From the outset King James demonstrated his belief in the divine right of kings to rule and the subjection of Parliament to the will of the king. He also insisted on strict conformity to the rites of the Anglican Church. This excluded both Catholics and Puritans from government, since conformity to the Anglican Church was required to hold public office.

**Catholic and puritan dissent.** English Catholics organised the Gunpowder Plot (5th November 1605), so called because a group of them tried to blow up the king and Parliament in session. The plot was denounced and many Catholics executed. Meanwhile, persecuted Puritans were leaving the country. In 1620 a group of Puritans called “Pilgrim Fathers” sailed to America on the Mayflower, where they founded New Plymouth in Massachusetts. This was the first English settlement in North America and the beginning of what was to become the United States. The colonization of Connecticut and New Hampshire started a few years later.

**Anglicans vs Puritans.** The struggle between Anglicans and Puritans- a contrast that in the 1640s would lead to the outbreak of the Civil War- reflected major political changes in England since the 15th century. The centre of power in Parliament had been gradually moving from the House of Lords to the House of Commons. The House of Commons represent the merchants and the landed gentry. The latter felt that their interests were not being taken into account, especially considering that they had to pay taxes to finance government policies. The conflict was also religious, given that the mentality (and interests) of these mercantile classes were better suited to Puritanism that to the position of the official Anglican Chuch.

**The Puritans’ appeal to the mercantile classes.**  The reason for the Puritans’ appeal to the mercantile classes can be summed up as flowers:

* Puritans austerity fitted in well with the lifestyle of people who made work rather pleasure their main occupation;
* Puritan insistence on predestination, with its belief that to have God on one’s side meant success in business;
* Finally, the Puritan belief in individual conscience as sufficient for individual salvation corresponded to the belief in unrestricted individualism in commercial matters, which was to form the basis of the Industrial Revolution in the 18th century.

**DOCUMENTS**

**T4. Hardships of the First American Settlers**

*William Bradford, History of Plantation (1650-51)*

*William Bradford, a fervent Puritan, was one of the Pilgrim Fathers who sailed to America on the Mayflower in 1620 to escape religious persecution and was among the founders of the Plymouth Colony. He ruled the Plymouth Colony from 1621 to 1656. His journal,* History of the Plymouth Plantation*, begins with the description of the* Mayflower *voyage and contains the history of the colony from 1630 to 1646.*

Being thus passed the vast ocean, […] they had now no friends to welcome them nor inns to entertain or refresh their weather beaten bodies: no houses or much less towns to repair to, to seek for succour. It is recorded in Scripture as a mercy to the Apostle and his shipwrecked company, that the barbarians showed them no small kindness in refreshing them; but these savage barbarians, when they met with them (as after will appear) were readier to fill their sides of arrows than otherwise. And for the season it was winter, and they that know the winters of that country know them to be sharp and violent, and subject to cruel and fierce storms, dangerous to travel to known places, much more to search an unknown coast. Besides, what would they see bus a hideous and desolate wilderness, full of wild beasts and wild men – and what multitudes there might be of them they knew not. Neither could they, as it were, go up to the top of Pisgah to view from this wilderness a more goodly country to feed their hopes; for which way soever they turned their eyes (save upward to the heavens) they could have little solace or content in respect of any outward object. For summer being done, all things stand upon them with a weather beaten face, and the whole country, full of woods and thickets, represented a wild and savage hue. If they looked behind them, there was the mighty ocean which they had passed and was now as a main bar and gulf to separate them from all civil parts of the world… What could now sustain them but the Spirit of God and His grace?

**DOCUMENTS**

**T5. The Colonisation of North America**

*Dee Brown, Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee (1971)*

*You are going to read a passage taken from a book which caused a sensation when it was published in 1971 because of its revisionist history of North America. As the book’s subtitle indicates (“An Indian History of the American West”), this account is written from the point of view of the Native Americans.* Bury My Hart at Wounded Knee *is a piece of serious historical research, based on native as well as European-American documents, but also reads like a novel, due to the passion an ethical integrity of the writer.*

After the Englishmen landed at Plymouth in 1620, most of them probably would have starved to death but for aid received from friendly natives of the New World. […] Indians regarded the Plymouth colonists as helpless children; they shared corn with them from the tribal stores, showed them where and how to catch fish, and got them through the first winter. When spring came they gave the white men some seed corn and showed them how to plant and cultivate it.

For several years these Englishmen and their Indian neighbors lived in peace, but many more shiploads if white people continued coming ashore. The ring of axes and the crash of falling trees echoed up and down the coasts of the land which the white man now called New England. Settlements began crowding in upon each other. In 1625 some of the colonists asked Samoset to give them 12,000 additional acres of Pemaquid land. Samoset knew that land came from the Greats Spirit, was as endless as the sky, and belonged to no man. to humor these strangers in their strange ways, however, he went through a ceremony of transferring the land and made his mark on a paper for them. It was the first deed of Indian land to English colonists.

Most of the other settlers coming in by thousand now, did not bother to go through such a ceremony. By the time Massasoit, great chief of the Wampanoags, died in 1662 his people were being pushed back into the wilderness.