

## RESEARCH & WRITING ACTIVITIES

- In the character of a *Mayflower* Pilgrim, write a letter to a friend or family member in England explaining why you have chosen to make this dangerous journey and what you hope to discover and do in the New World. If desired, print the letter in a 17th century font, such as Secretary Script, and give it an old-world look by using distressed, tea-stained or hand-made paper.
- Go online or visit your local or school library to learn more about the word “pilgrim.” Have you ever felt like a pilgrim, making a journey for spiritual or other special reasons? Write a short essay describing this journey, or a pilgrimage you would like to make someday. Share your essay with friends or classmates, discussing how these experiences would help readers better understand the motivations and choices made by the Plymouth Colony Pilgrims.
- Using information from the book, and other resources if desired, create a guide to the Native American tribes and/or colonial settlements of 1640 New England. For each group, note its location; the names of leaders; its alliances to other tribes, settlements or European nations; and its role in the violence surrounding King Philip’s War. Organize your information on a large chart or in a booklet.
- Experience the challenges of interacting with people of another culture. Label two containers, “customs” and “objectives” and fill them with cards as follows: “Customs” cards might include “makes fist for greeting,” “is a sachem before whom others must kneel,” or “is offended by smiles.” “Objectives” cards might include “borrow a pencil,” “trade a book for a food item,” or “get the other person to join you for a walk.” Divide into pairs. One person, the Pilgrim, selects an objective card and assumes modern-day manners and language. The other person, the Native American, selects a customs card, which guides his or her behavior, and cannot speak English (Hint: If you speak another language not understood by your partner, such as Spanish or Japanese, you may use this language.) Pairs then take 2–3 minute timed turns trying to communicate and accomplish the objective. Afterward, discuss how this exercise helped you understand the challenges faced by Pilgrims and Native Americans in terms of understanding and trust.
- Visit [www.ushistory.org/documents](http://www.ushistory.org/documents) to read the Articles of Confederation (Parts I-V) and/or the U. S. Constitution (Preamble and Part I). In a short essay, share your thoughts about the influence of the Mayflower Compact on the words of these documents, and why Nathaniel Philbrick calls all

three “essential American text[s].” Or read the Constitution of the Iroquois Nations ([www.constitution.org/cons/iroquois.htm](http://www.constitution.org/cons/iroquois.htm)) and write an essay explaining the assertion “the Founding Fathers based the provisions of the Constitution on the unique system of democracy of the Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy, which divided powers among the branches of government and provided for a system of checks and balances . . . ” (Congressional Bill HR 3585, proposing a Native American Heritage Day).

- In his later years, William Bradford expressed his reservations about the future of the Plymouth Colony. Based on information from the book, write the script for a ten-minute play in which Bradford warns several fictional young Plymouth residents of his concerns. How might these less religious, more prosperity-focused individuals react to Bradford’s words? With what event or action might you conclude your play? Perform your play for classmates or family members.
- Learn more about the Massachusetts Bay Colony, Harvard College, the Pequot War, the abduction of Mary Rowlandson, Rhode Island and the Quakers, smallpox in the New World, the United Colonies of New England, the Covenant Chain, or another topic inspired by your reading of *The Mayflower and the Pilgrims’ New World*. Present the results of your research on an informative poster, including a timeline and illustrations or other graphic elements.
- Going to war is a serious decision for a nation. Go to the library or online to learn more about the events that drew America into World War I, World War II, the Vietnam War, Korean War, or Gulf War. Make a two-columned chart comparing what you have learned about the beginnings of these later conflicts with the factors leading to King Philip’s War. Share your chart with friends or classmates.
- Imagine you are a young colonist or a Praying Indian who has just found out that King Philip has been killed. Write a journal entry describing your feelings and your hopes for the future at this moment in history.
- Hold a Colonial Day in your classroom or community. Eat and dress as 17th century New England dwellers would have done. Ask each participant to give a two-minute autobiographical presentation in the character of a real historical figure, such as Miles Standish, Mary Rowlandson, Uncas or Awashonks. Use paints, colored paper, clay, and other craft materials to create dioramas of key moments in colonial history to display.

Set sail on a voyage to the birth of America  
with National Book Award Winner  
and Pulitzer Prize Finalist  
NATHANIEL PHILBRICK

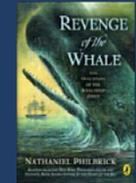


### The Mayflower and the Pilgrims’ New World

by Nathaniel Philbrick  
ISBN: 978-0-399-24795-8 (HC)  
Ages 9-11 • Grades 4-6 • \$19.99

In stunning prose, Nathaniel Philbrick evokes the drama of the voyage of the *Mayflower* and the eerie emptiness of coastal Massachusetts that greeted the Pilgrims. He tells how the settlers were able to gain the friendship of many powerful Native American leaders, and how they worked together to maintain peace. But the promise of the First Thanksgiving was broken with the next generation of leaders. *The Mayflower and the Pilgrims’ New World* is the perfect introduction for young readers to this epic story, at once tragic and heroic.

Also available for young readers by Nathaniel Philbrick:



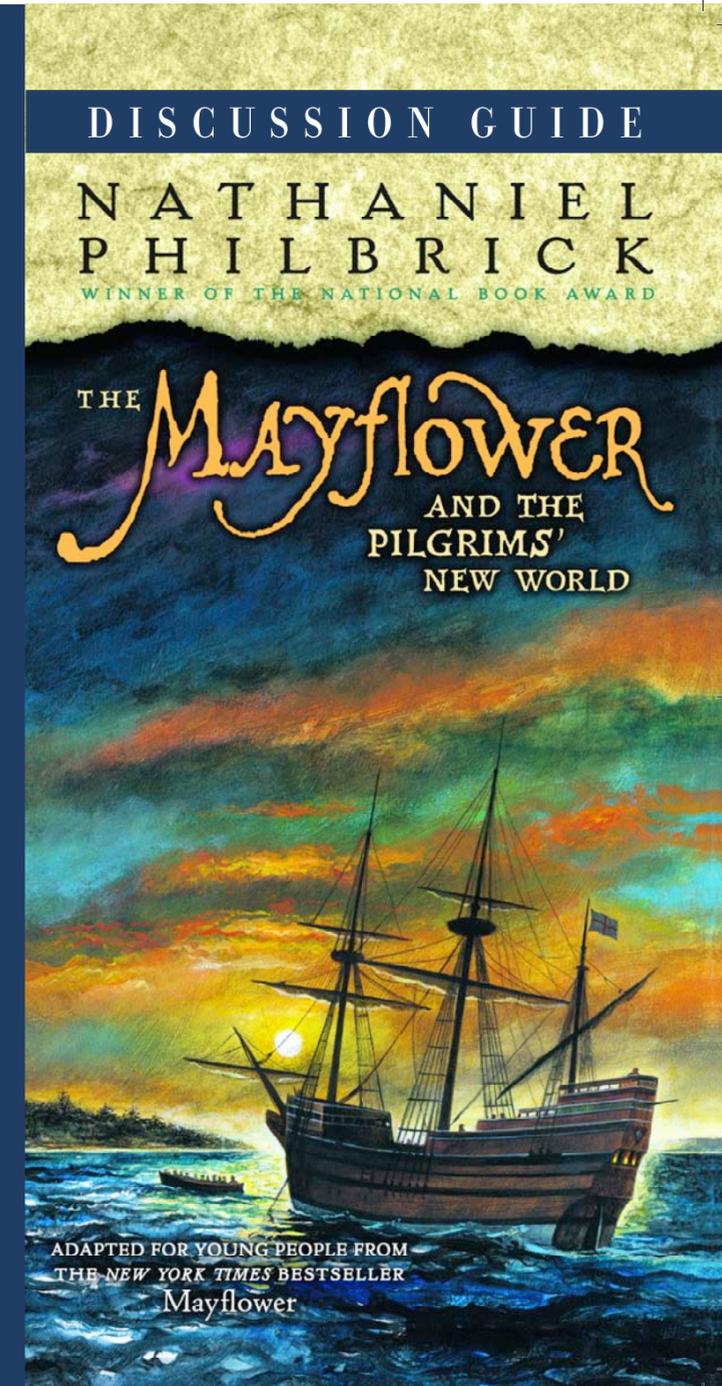
### Revenge of the Whale: The True Story of the Whaleship Essex

ISBN: 978-0-399-23795-9 (HC) • \$16.99  
ISBN: 978-0-14-240068-5 (PB) • \$7.99  
Ages 10 up • Grades 5 up

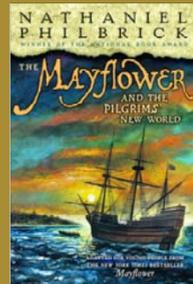
On November 20, 1820, the whaleship *Essex* was rammed and sunk by an angry whale. Within minutes, the twenty-one-man crew, including fourteen-year-old cabin boy Thomas Nickerson, found themselves stranded in three leaky boats in the middle of the Pacific Ocean with barely any supplies and little hope. Three months later, two of the boats were rescued 4,500 miles away, off the coast of South America. Of the twenty-one castaways, only eight survived, including young Thomas. Based on his *New York Times* bestseller and National Book Award winner *In the Heart of the Sea*, Nathaniel Philbrick recreates the amazing events of the ill-fated *Essex* through the sailors’ own first-hand accounts, photos, maps, and artwork, and tells the tale of one of the great true-life adventure stories.

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## ABOUT THE BOOK



This dynamic adaptation of Nathaniel Philbrick's National Book Award-winning adult book takes the *Mayflower's* legendary transatlantic voyage as the starting point for a dramatic account of the half-century which followed. Along with their religious ideals, the *Pilgrims* carried aboard with them debts to investors, and shipmates whose goals were not spiritual but financial. The colonists' simple plans to protect and develop their fledgling Plymouth settlement were challenged by the raw, physical hardships of New England life and most significantly by the Native Americans, whose relationship with the land was radically different from their own. With detailed insights into the personalities of key European and Indian history-makers, the author shows how the community spirit evoked in tales of the first Thanksgiving deteriorated over the ensuing generations into the confusion and brutal enmity of King Philip's War and, ultimately, the journey of a lesser known ship, the *Seaflower*, loaded with a cargo of Native American slaves. Like the Pilgrims themselves, young readers of *The Mayflower and the Pilgrims New World* will embark on a challenging adventure that forces them to examine their own understanding of the Pilgrims' legacy—and of the America they have come to inherit.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



NATHANIEL PHILBRICK lives in Nantucket, Massachusetts. His first book for young readers, *Revenge of the Whale*, won the *Boston Globe-Horn Book Award* for nonfiction, and was adapted from his adult book *In the Heart of the Sea*, for which he won the National Book Award. His adult book *Mayflower*, from which *The Mayflower and the Pilgrims' New World* is adapted, spent more than thirty weeks on the *New York Times* bestseller lists and was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize. To learn more about Mr. Philbrick, please visit [www.nathanielphilbrick.com](http://www.nathanielphilbrick.com)

## PRE-READING QUESTIONS

- When you think of the *Mayflower*, what ideas or images come to mind? Can you name the first governor of the Plymouth Colony or the sachem who ruled the Pokanoket Indians with whom the Pilgrims first made contact?
- About how many Native Americans were living in New England at the time of the Pilgrims' landing? Can you name at least three tribal groups or Native American individuals from this period? What other Europeans were settling or trading in the American Northeast in the 17th century?
- What ideas did the Europeans and Native Americans have about each other at the time the *Mayflower* sailed to America? Did the Pilgrims come to the colonies with an informed plan for interacting with the Indians?
- Can you remember the first time you learned about the Pilgrims and the Native Americans with whom they celebrated the First Thanksgiving? How old were you? Who was your teacher? How was the story told?
- What do you think happened in Plymouth, Massachusetts, the day after the First Thanksgiving? The year after? Ten years after? Fifty years after?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### Part I: DISCOVERY

- Why did the Pilgrims decide to attempt settlement in the New World? Do you think their plan was well-made? Why did they finally settle in Massachusetts instead of their intended Virginia? Do you think any group traveling in the 1620s could have done better, given the resources available at the time?
- Why did the Pilgrims and other passengers decide to forge the Mayflower Compact? What is the main objective, or principle, laid out in the Compact?
- What had happened to the Native American population in the years just before the Pilgrims' arrival and how had Europeans contributed to this catastrophe? What questionable actions did the Pilgrims take in trying to establish contact with their Native American neighbors? How did these events affect the early Pilgrim-Native American interactions?
- Compare and contrast the Mayflower Compact with the Pilgrims' initial agreement with Pokanoket sachem Massasoit. How do these texts help readers understand the Pilgrims' attitudes toward the Adventurers and the Pokanokets?

- How does the author's account of the First Thanksgiving differ from previous descriptions you have read? Describe the relationship between the Pilgrims, the Pokanokets and the other denizens of New England at this moment in history.

### Part II: COMMUNITY

- Describe at least two ways in which the title of the book's second section can be understood. How did the Pilgrims view themselves and their efforts in the context of Plymouth; of European settlements in New England; and of the New World community, including its Native Americans?
- What roles did Squanto and the Wessagussett community play in the dangerous realignment of colonial and Native American alliances? Who helped to reestablish the Pilgrims' friendship with Massasoit and how did this lead to the attack on Wessagussett? How does this early attack provide a blueprint for the Colonial-Indian conflicts of the ensuing years?
- How did the establishment of the Massachusetts Bay Colony and the Great Migration of the 1630s to the New World impact the Pilgrims? What was the importance of the United Colonies of New England? How did Native American leaders, such as Miantonomi, also recognize and attempt to address the need for collective action among their own peoples? What were the results of these efforts?
- How and why did the Plymouth colony begin to spread and disperse during the 1630s? Why did this worry Governor Bradford from a religious perspective? How did he connect this concern to his disapproval of gun sales to the Indians?
- Who were the "Praying Indians"? Were colonial missionary efforts to convert Indians successful? In the many conflicts between colonial and Indian groups, was religion ever the incendiary factor? Why or why not?
- In what ways did the attitudes of Massasoit's sons and of the sons of the *Mayflower* Pilgrims change in similar fashions? Do you think they simply forgot the lessons of history? What other factors may have impacted the viewpoints of these young men?
- How was the death of Alexander a turning point in Pilgrim-Indian relations? Do you think the Pilgrims were right to call Philip (Metacomet) repeatedly into Plymouth courts? What were the charges? Were his punishments just?

### PART III: WAR

- How did Native American land sales to colonists impact tribal fortunes? Do you think the colonists made honorable deals for Indian land? How did the land situation contribute to Philip's sense that he was being forced into a war position? What other major factors drove Philip toward a commitment to fighting?
- What were Philip's strategies for amassing a sufficient army to fight the English? Was there agreement among the Indian tribes regarding Philip's plan? Describe the opinions of dissenting sachems such as Awashonks. Describe the various colonies' commitments to the war begun between Philip and the Pilgrims. How and why did these agreements and alliances change during the course of the war?
- How did the colonists changing attitudes towards Native Americans, particularly the "Praying Indians," help turn the tides of the war? How did Benjamin Church's military strategy help evoke these changing attitudes?
- What were the major Native American victories during King Philip's war? What were the major Colonial battle successes? Compare and contrast Indian and colonial war strategies. What led to Philip's ultimate defeat?
- What percentage of Puritan and Native American populations were lost in the war? How was the property ownership map of New England changed by the war?
- Give at least two reasons the departure of the *Seaflower* is a fitting event with which to end this narrative.

## POST-READING QUESTIONS

- How might the Pilgrims and Native Americans of 1620 have defined the terms *spirituality*, *prosperity*, *property ownership*, *loyalty* and *war*? How might their children or grandchildren have defined these notions in 1676? In what ways did these two groups bring about changes to each others' definitions? How do you think these changes affected the land that would, a century later, become the United States of America?
- Why are the stories of the First Thanksgiving and Plymouth Rock, though more legend than fact, still important parts of American history? How does understanding the way these stories evolved into legend help us understand more about American history and culture? Might this change the way you study other famous historical moments?
- In what way has this book impacted your understanding of colonial America? How might you tell the story of the Pilgrims' journey to others today?