



UNDERSTANDING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MAYFLOW COMPACT

Learning Objectives: The students will...

1. Identify the reasons for the establishment of the colony at Plymouth as recorded in the Mayflower Compact.
2. Understand the importance of the Mayflower Compact to the growth of representative government.

TEKS: 8.3B, 8.15A, 8.19C

Materials Needed: Copies of the Mayflower Compact, highlighters.

Vocabulary: covenant, civil body politic

Teaching Strategy:

1. Use the PowerPoint with the painting that depicts the signing of the Mayflower Compact to introduce the lesson. As the students are looking at the picture, ask them the following questions:
 - a. Where is the setting of the picture? Answer—Below the deck of the *Mayflower* as the Pilgrims have reached the coast of Massachusetts.
 - b. What do you think the man with the pen is doing? Answer—He is asking the man and others around the desk to sign a document.
 - c. After looking at their faces, what do you think they are feeling at this moment? Answer—Many look solemn and serious which indicates the significance of this document and its signing.
2. Pass out a copy of the Mayflower Compact to each student and explain that this is a copy of the document being signed in the painting. The teacher should read the introduction, making sure that the students realize that even though the document was not very long, it has an important role in establishing the ideas of the foundation of our government.
3. As the teacher and/or students are reading first part of the Mayflower Compact together, have the students highlight the passages that state the following reasons for establishing this colony:
 - a. For the glory of God
 - b. For the advancement of Christianity
 - c. To honor the King and country
4. Ask the students to explain what this tells them about the beliefs of the Pilgrims and why they may have braved the trip across the Atlantic to the New World. Answer—The Pilgrims were willing to make the trip because of their desire to worship and live as they believed.
5. Continue reading the document and have the students highlight the part that identifies what the Pilgrims believed to be the origin of government. Check their answers to be sure they have identified that the Pilgrims believed that the origin and authority of their government comes from the people (men) who are going to sign the Compact.
6. Working with a partner, have the students develop their answers to the following questions:
 - a. How is the Pilgrim belief about the origin of government different from that of people in Europe at this time? Answer—Most Europeans believed that the monarch that ruled them had the authority to govern from God. This is called the “divine right” theory of government.

- b. Why is the idea about the origin of government significant to our beliefs about government in the United States? Answer—We believe that the authority to create a government comes from the people. We call this popular sovereignty. This is the first example of the social contract theory of government in the world and years before the English philosophers, Thomas Hobbes and John Locke wrote about it in their works.
- c. Conclude the lesson by having the students decide on an appropriate title for the painting used at the first of class. Be sure they understand the title should reflect the importance of the scene. Allow students to share their titles.

MAYFLOWER COMPACT

" . . . to enact . . . just and equal laws . . . for the general good of the colony "

On November 11, 1620, the storm-battered vessel bearing the Pilgrims to the lonely shores of the New World sailed in from the open sea and dropped anchor in the chill waters of what is now Provincetown Harbor. The *Mayflower* was far off its course, and the Pilgrims had no legal right to settle in New England or to establish a government. But they had no choice, for winter was close at hand, and the colony had to be started. Confronted by the need for action, the Pilgrim leaders drafted the *Mayflower Compact*. Later, the men gathered in the smoke-blackened cabin of the ship and, in the flickering light of a fish-oil lamp, signed their names to the now historic document. The *Mayflower Compact* became an important landmark along the road leading to democracy. True, it did not extend the privilege of participating in government to others besides the Pilgrims themselves. True, it did not outline, or even attempt to outline, a plan of government. But and this is the significant point the Compact did commit the Pilgrims to the creation of a government based on the consent of the governed.

November 11, 1620

In the name of God, Amen. We whose names are underwritten, the loyal subjects of our dread [revered and feared] 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 honor of our king and country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the northern parts of Virginia, do by these presents [this document] solemnly and mutually in the presence of God, and of one another, covenant [promise] and combine ourselves together into a civil body politic [group organized for government] for our better ordering and preservation and furtherance of the ends aforesaid; and by virtue [authority] hereof, to enact, constitute, and frame such just and equal laws, ordinances [regulations], acts, constitutions, and offices from time to time, as shall be thought most meet [fitting] and convenient for the general good of the colony unto which we promise all due submission and obedience.

In WITNESS whereof, we have hereunto subscribed our names at Cape Cod, the eleventh 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 Domini*, 1620.

[Signed by forty-one men on the *Mayflower*.]

JOHN CARVER	ISAAC ALLERTON	FRANCIS EATON	
WILLIAM BRADFORD	MILES STANDISH	JAMES CHILTON	
EDWARD WINSLOW	JOHN ALDEN	JOHN CRAXTON	
WILLIAM BREWSTER	JOHN TURNER	JOHN BILLINGTON	
JOSES FLETCHER	THOMAS WILLIAMS	THOMAS TINKER	
JOHN GOODMAN	GILBERT WINSLOW	JOHN RIDGATE	
SAMUEL FULLER	EDMUND MARGESSON	EDWARD FULLER	
CHRISTOPHER MARTIN	PETER BROWN	RICHARD CLARK	WILLIAM MULLINS
RICHARD BITTERIDGE	RICHARD GARDINER	WILLIAM WHITE	GEORGE SOULE
JOHN ALLERTON			
RICHARD WARREN	EDWARD TILLY	THOMAS ENGLISH	
JOHN HOWLAND	JOHN TILLY	EDWARD DOTEN	
STEPHEN HOPKIS	FRANCIS COOKE	EDWARD LIESTER	
DIGERY PRIEST	THOMAS ROGERS		