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In grade school children learn a simple story about how the Pilgrims left England in pursuit of religious freedom in the New World. While the voyage on the *Mayflower* was difficult, after arriving in America and establishing their settlement the Pilgrims enjoyed a bountiful harvest and their newly formed relationship with the Native Americans at the first Thanksgiving. While heartwarming, this story does not accurately depict the reality of these people and their experiences. First, the Pilgrims were not a homogenous group of worshippers. Rather, the group was divided between the “saints,” exiles seeking a safe haven from religious persecution, and the “strangers,” who had varying reasons for joining the journey. In addition to helping lower the cost of the journey, the “strangers” were seeking the opportunity for a better economic future, were escaping criminal conviction, or were looking for adventure. They “included merchants, craftsmen, skilled workers and indentured servants, and several young orphans” (Costly). These diverse people with different beliefs and cultures first had to coexist on the *Mayflower* in confinement while disease, starvation and the rough seas took their toll. Then upon arriving in America they had to rely upon each other to establish and sustain their communities for their joint survival.

If the *Mayflower* reached its intended destination in Virginia, the settlement agreement signed at the start of their journey would have mandated how the colony would be governed. Since the ship instead landed in Massachusetts, which was outside the jurisdiction of the Virginia Company, they were free of all government controls. Disagreements between the “saints” and the “strangers” began while still on the *Mayflower* and required drafting new laws for this community to avoid rebellion. Without the “strangers” on board, the “saints” could have formed an agreement more in line with their religious beliefs. Instead the two groups created the Mayflower Compact, a more inclusive framework for governance and the foundation of later American documents like the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. With this agreement the two groups had a common framework of freedom and equality and the foundation of democracy.

Admittedly, the Pilgrims might not have survived in the New World had it not been for the contributions of the “strangers.” Stephen Hopkins was recruited by the Company of Merchant Adventurers of London to provide the governance for the colony and to assist with colony’s ventures. “He was well-versed in the hunting techniques and general lifestyle of American Indians from his years in Jamestown” (Stephen Hopkins). His hunting and fishing skills were critical to the settlers who were on the verge of starvation for several months. “Over the years Hopkins’ assistance to Pilgrim leaders...regarding his knowledge of the local languages was found to be quite useful” (Stephen Hopkins). Hopkins served as an ambassador to the

Wampanoag Native American tribe and was instrumental in peace agreements with them. In addition, the Wampanoag provided guidance on planting and traded with the settlers. Stephen became a successful merchant in America. In addition, his wife Elizabeth helped cook the first Thanksgiving feast along with three other surviving Pilgrim women.

Richard Warren along with Miles Standish were two “strangers” who worked collaboratively with the “saints” for the betterment of the colony. They spent months exploring suitable settlement locations on Cape Cod with congregation leaders. “Standish was hired by the Pilgrims to be their military captain, to establish and coordinate the Colony’s defense against both foreign (French, Spanish, Dutch) and domestic (Native American) threats” (Johnson). Standish who previously had been part of Queen Elizabeth’s army, organized the construction of the fort at Plymouth and the mounting of cannons to ensure its fortification.

Most stories of the Plymouth Colony refer collectively to the Pilgrims rather than distinguishing between the “saints” and the “strangers.” These two groups had different motivations for seeking a new home. However, their survival and success were quickly intertwined as they suffered from malnutrition, insufficient shelter, and outside enemies. While struggling for their very existence their differences drove the need for a new self-governance model for the Colony. This “government of the people, by the people, for the people” would lay the foundation for the United States’ democracy (Cline). Without the “strangers” on board the *Mayflower*, the Plymouth Colony may have succumbed to starvation and attacks and not prevailed.

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