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## **Sailing on the Mayflower**

The ship the Pilgrims sailed on was called the Mayflower. The Mayflower was a cargo ship—built for transporting goods. For 12 years, it had been used to carry wine. It was not meant to carry passengers.



### **Passengers and Crew**

The ship was about 90 feet long—about as long as two trailer trucks, or five pickups. Not big at all. And yet, crowded into that ship were 102 Pilgrims (thirty-four of them were children) and about 30 crew members. There were also 2 dogs on the ship. And a cat. Every ship had a cat to catch the rats.

Not all crew members were sailors. On board were a doctor, a shoemaker, a blacksmith (metal worker) and a cooper (barrel maker). The cooper's job was to look after the barrels of beer and water, and to make sure they didn't leak.

Most of the Pilgrims were farmers or shopkeepers. There were also some servants who'd been hired to do the hardest work.

A baby was born aboard the ship. His parents named him Oceanus.

The sailors and the Pilgrims didn't like each other. The sailors hated the Pilgrims prayers and holy songs, and they made fun of the Pilgrims who got seasick. The Pilgrims were offended by the sailors' rough ways and objected to the bad language the sailors used.

### **Belongings**

With so many people, there wasn't room for much else onboard the Mayflower. Each family could bring just one chest of clothes and other belongings.

The women brought things they would need for cooking. The men brought guns, swords, and tools. When they arrived in the New World, they would need tools for building houses and working a garden.

Whatever didn't fit in the chest had to be left behind. There certainly was no room for children's toys.

### **Food and Drink**

The trip across the Atlantic took 66 days. And the Pilgrims ate pretty much the same food day after day. Their diet consisted of dried fish, salted meat and hardtack, a hard dry biscuit.

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There were barrels of beer and barrels of water. But after standing in the barrels for a while, the water was not safe to drink. So, everyone drank beer – even the children.

The Pilgrims had to look out for bugs in their food. Every ship in those days had bugs crawling everywhere. By the end of the voyage, the biscuits got harder. The cheese got moldy. The butter turned bad. Even the beer began to go sour.

### **Living Conditions**

The ship was small and very crowded. Most people slept on the floor below deck. It was dark and there was hardly any air. The sailors slept on deck or in hammocks. A few important passengers shared the captain's cabin.

There was not water for baths or laundry. People wore the same clothes day after day, night after night. There were no bathrooms either. Everybody used a pot and dumped the contents overboard. The first thing the Pilgrims did when they landed was to wash their clothes.

### **A Dangerous Voyage**

It was dangerous for one small ship to make such a long voyage. In those days, one ship almost never sailed alone. What would happen if the Mayflower were shipwrecked? What would happen if they ran out of food and supplies? Who would get word to England?

Storms were the biggest danger.

The Mayflower sailed in good winds and good weather for about a month. Then, in October, strong winds began to blow. The Mayflower tossed and rolled in the waves. The tossing and rolling made most of the passengers seasick. On top of that, the ship leaked. The Pilgrims got soaked. So did their clothes, their bedding and even their food.

Sickness was another problem.

One day, the doctor's servant, young Will Butten, took sick. He had ship's fever (typhus). The doctor could not help him, and Will Butten died. Then other people started getting sick. No one else died during the voyage, but many more died soon afterwards.

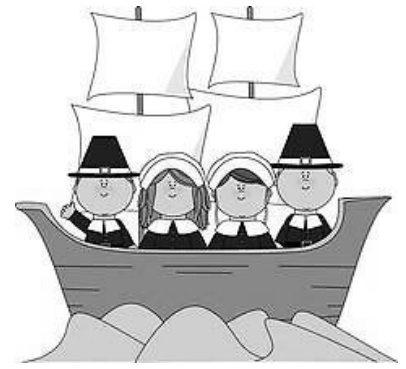
### **Landing**

The Pilgrims reached land on November 11, 1620. It had been a tough voyage and they would have an even tougher winter. But by the next November, those who survived had much to be thankful for.

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**Sailing on the Mayflower** (Questions):

1. Not all the Separatists living in Holland were willing to risk the voyage to America. If you had been a *Separatist* would you have sailed to America or would you have stayed behind in Holland? Explain.



2. Not all the passengers on the Mayflower were headed to the New World for religious reasons. Why were they going?
3. If you were a Stranger (not a Separatist), what might have convinced you to join the Pilgrims on their voyage?