



0. A NEAR-MUTINY - Story Preface

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Edward Percy Moran created this oil painting, "Signing the Mayflower Compact," circa 1900. It is currently owned, and maintained, by Pilgrim Hall Museum.

Some of the passengers, thinking they could ignore their indentured-servant contracts because they had not landed in Virginia, declared they would be free as soon as they stepped onto land. William Bradford describes this source of controversy in his history of the Plymouth Plantation:

Occasioned partly by the discontented and mutinous speeches that some of the strangers amongst them had let fall from them in the ship: That when they came ashore they would use their own liberty, for none had power to command them, the patent they had being for Virginia and not for New England, which belonged to another government, with which the Virginia Company had nothing to do. (Of Plymouth Plantation 1620-1647, page 83.)

The "strangers" had a point when they asserted "none had power to command them" in New England. Who, in this new land, had the authority to enforce contracts? What government was in place to make them do anything? As Bradford notes:

Being thus passed the vast ocean, and a sea of troubles before in their preparation (as may be remembered by that which went before), they had now no friends to welcome them nor inns to entertain or refresh their weatherbeaten bodies; no houses or much less towns to repair to, to seek for succor. . . For summer being done, all things stand upon them with a weatherbeaten 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 the civil parts of the world. (Of Plymouth Plantation 1620-1647, pages 69- 70.)

In the "civil parts of the world," which these English folks had left behind, the King was the ultimate authority. But the King (James I/VI at the time of the Mayflower landing) was three thousand miles away. Who would grant the authority to govern daily life in this strange new land? Could the answer possibly be: The people themselves?

The near-mutiny was resolved by the "Mayflower Compact," the first-known self-governing document created by American immigrants.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/A-NEAR-MUTINY-Pilgrims-to-America-A-Pictorial-History)

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See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/A-NEAR-MUTINY-Pilgrims-to-America-A-Pictorial-History)

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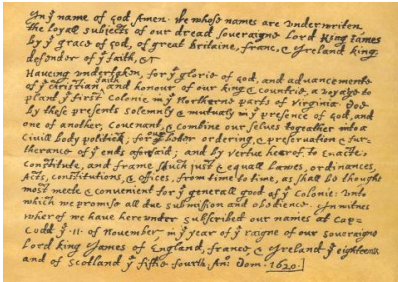
Pilgrims - Leaving the Flemish Coast

This 1880 engraving is by J. B. Hunt, after a work by C. J. Staniland.

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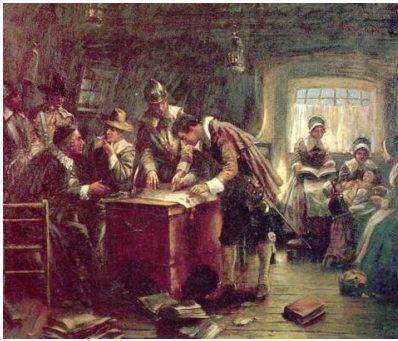


Mayflower Compact - Original Document

Image, U.S. National Archives.

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