



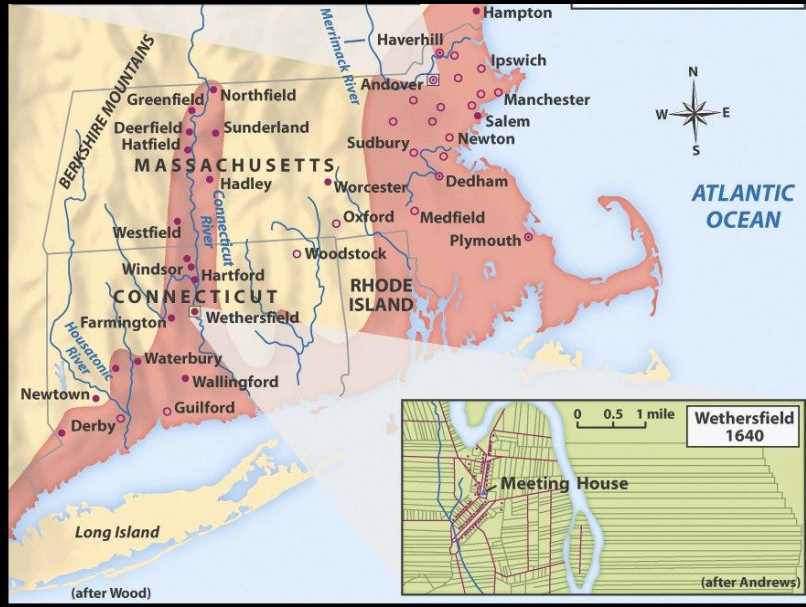
The Puritans: Literature and Historical Context

Puritan Legacy

- “Puritan” refers to religious groups who separated themselves from the Church of England.
- Puritans believed that rulers such as Henry VIII (who ruled from 1509-1547) had tainted and complicated Christianity.
- Puritans wanted to return to a purer, simpler form of worship and sought the freedom to do so in America.



Puritans in America



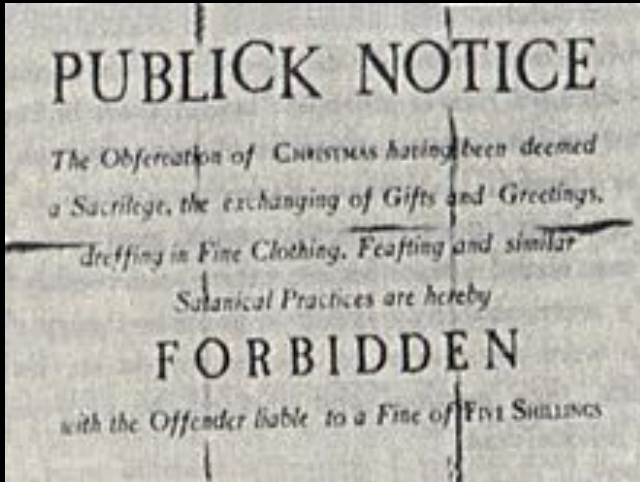
- A large portion of American immigrants were Puritans seeking a new world to express their religious beliefs.
- From 1630-1640, about 20,000 Puritans migrated to “New England” on the east coast of modern day United States.

Puritan Beliefs: Key Terms

- **Total Depravity** – The Puritan belief that from the moment of birth, human beings are filthy, disgusting, and often evil.
- **Original Sin** – the original sin of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden: the eating from the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. That sin is passed down from generation to generation.



Puritan Beliefs: Key Terms



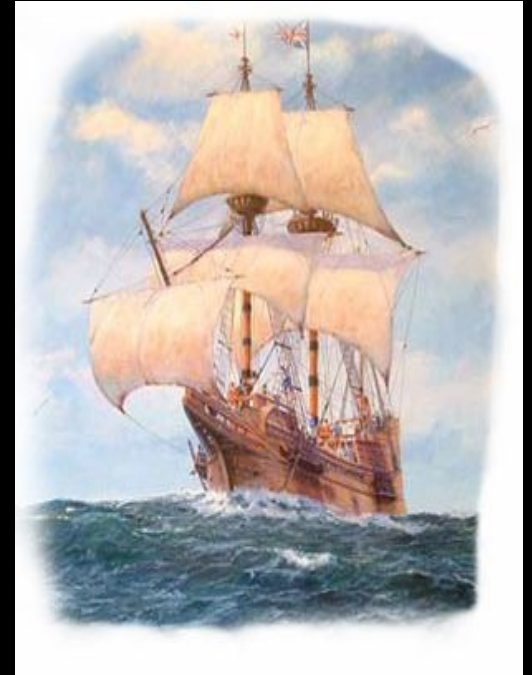
- **Grace** – the one shining light in the Puritan theology: God, for reasons unknown to humans, may decide to **forgive** or demonstrate an act of goodness
- **New Eden** – the Puritan idea that the Pilgrims would actually establish a New Eden in the New World. The Puritans wanted to return to the past, or “**simpler times.**” They thought it was their duty to God to reenact Biblical history.

Puritan Beliefs: Key Terms

- **The Elect**– The belief that only certain people were predestined to go to Heaven. Puritans believed about **1 in 100 people** were “saved,” or part of the Elect.

On the Mayflower, there were 102 people (103 after one woman, Elizabeth Hopkins, gave birth to her son Oceanus Hopkins). Which means out of all of the passengers, only one or two would have been “saved.”

- **The Damned**– The other 99% of people who were going to Hell.



Puritan Beliefs: Key Terms

- **Special Providence**– The belief that God sometimes intervenes in the daily lives of human beings by showing some kindness.
- **Puritan Concept of God** was very different from the modern Christian notion of God. The Puritan god was seen as mean, wrathful, and someone to be feared but who, at times, could be kind and show his grace (but not often).
- **Biblical Commonwealth**– The belief that the laws of their colony should be those reflected in the Old Testament. Puritans would have considered the separation of church and state to be blasphemous.

Puritan Beliefs: Key Terms



Predestination – the belief that, before time and the universe began, God determined who was going to Heaven and who was going to Hell.

Puritans didn't believe simply doing good deeds would get you into Heaven – if a person knows that simply acting good will get them into Heaven, then they are acting out of **selfishness** (a desire to be saved, rather than a desire to actually do good deeds). God has already determined who is good and who is damned.

So, why bother doing anything good?

Even though this was a strict religious belief and faith matter, Puritans still weren't completely sure they were right, so...

- They tried to ensure they would go to Heaven by being obsessively **pure**
- They had very strict religious standards which came into effect when children turned **seven** years old
- With the strict religious standards came extremely harsh **punishments**: long imprisonments, hangings, excommunications, banishments, and public humiliation were common

Signs, Signs Everywhere...

- Due to their extreme concern about whether or not they made it into Heaven, Puritans were obsessed with looking for “signs” from God
- They believed that you could tell whether or not you were past of the Elect or the Damned based on what happened to you.
- One such “sign” was wealth – if one was wealthy, you were clearly in God’s favor thus going to heaven

That sounds exhausting!



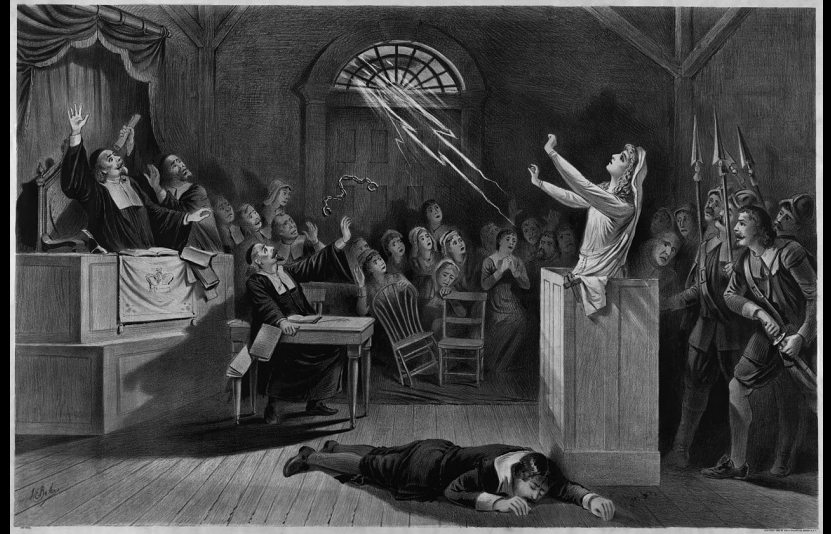
- And it was; Puritans had such strict rules and such a rigorously pious lifestyle that it turned ordinary people into **caricatures**; men were judgmental and condescending, and the women were catty and exclusionary
- People loved to see others who were **worse off** than them, because it could be a “sign” that they themselves were Elect

Puritan History: Key Dates

1620 – The establishment of the Puritan colony at **Plymouth Rock**

1630 – Establishment of the **Boston colony**. Eventually, populations of the two colonies grew, and they merged into one larger colony.

1692 – the Salem Witch Trials. Over **200 people were accused**, imprisoned, or arrested. **Nineteen people were hanged**, and another was pressed to death by stones. Two dogs were also executed.



Modern Influence

- **Protestant work ethic:** The Puritans believed that hard work was a way of winning God's favor, and wealth accumulated through hard, honest work was seen as a sign of Godliness and was encouraged of all Puritans.

This "Protestant work ethic" is a major foundation of the American way of life.

- **Christian Influence** – while modern Christianity is quite different from the way Puritans practiced it, Christian ideals set forth by the Puritans is at the core of our nation's founding ("One nation, under God...")

the like accounts is this short
ent into thee. I hope I
and the chief design of my
hath placed in the hearts
my own and in the hearts
of our Lord and Saviour
passing of which end, if
sum of the account I
saints, it will be looked
by its unworthy author,

JOHN OWEN.

OF THE
MORTIFICATION OF SIN IN BELIEVERS, ETC.

CHAPTER I.

The foundation of the whole ensuing discourse laid in Rom. viii. 13.—The words
of the apostle opened.—The certain connection between true mortification and
salvation.—Mortification the work of believers.—The Spirit the principal effi-
cient cause of it.—What meant by "the body" in the words of the apostle—
What by "the deeds of the body"—Life, in what sense promised to this duty.

TEXT what I have of direction to contribute to the carrying on of
the work of mortification in believers may receive order and perspi-
cuity. I shall lay the foundation of it in these words of the apostle,
Rom. viii. 13. "If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the
flesh, ye shall live." The whole to an improvement of the

Puritan Writing: Style/Genres

Puritan Writing Styles

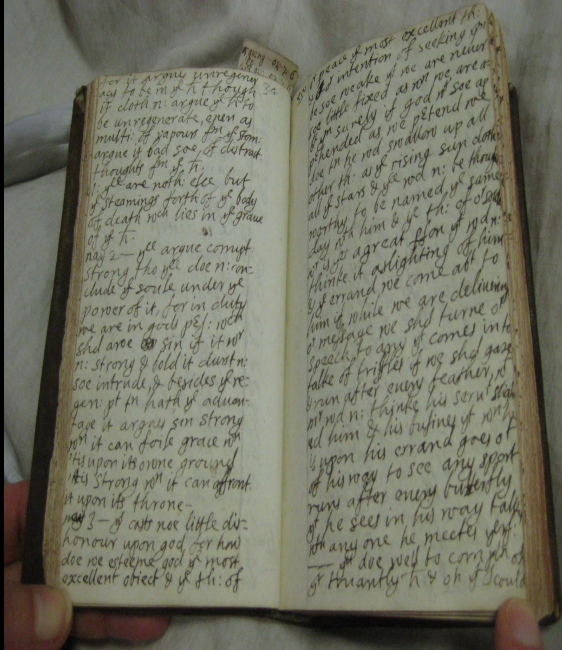
Plain Style – Puritans believed adorning writing with figurative language was “sinful” unless used for religious purposes. They believed figurative language could cause the mind to be imaginative, which might make the reader prey for the Devil.

Archaic Language – Puritans attempted to mimic language found in old translations of the Old Testament. Words like “whilst,” “betook,” and “betimes” were actually less modern than other writings of the time.

Allusive – Puritan writings were filled with allusions (or references) to the Bible



Puritan Writing Genres



Chronicles and histories – the Puritans kept detailed records of the daily happenings of their lives and communities – nonfiction writing was seen as recording the workings of God

Journals and diaries – Every good Puritan kept a journal in which (s)he recorded their spiritual reflections and contemplations of whether they were one of the Elect

Some poetry – Although Puritans did write poetry (secretly, for the most part) about personal life experiences, it was considered sinful to write poetry unless the theme was religious

Puritan Writing Genres

Sermons – Puritans loved going to sermons. They would, at times, listen to two 2-3 hour sermons a day on Sunday, and during the week would often travel to neighboring towns to hear additional sermons. Sermons were essentially their form of entertainment.

No Stories – as imagination was considered sinful, novels and short stories were not developed until the late 1700s.

