

# The words we choose to use

Mayflower learning resource



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printed by Christopher Barker  
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Family association: William Barker

# The words we choose to use...

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## Words are important

Throughout history, words have been used to suppress and control, or amplify and celebrate, the perception of the people and events they are used to describe. This has been the case with the *Mayflower* story.

As part of the curation of 'Mayflower 400: Legend and Legacy', The Box has conducted in-depth consultation about the words used in the exhibition with the people whose lives continue to be touched by *Mayflower's* legacy.

If you want to explore this fascinating and complex topic with similar sensitivity, you can also adopt the words we've chosen to use.

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## The ships

### The Mayflower

The name of the ship that sailed across the Atlantic carrying a group of passengers. Ships were often given names for good fortune. A may flower is thought to be hawthorn and was a symbol of luck. There were 26 ships named *Mayflower* during the reign of James I.

### The Speedwell

The name of the other ship that was originally supposed to travel with the *Mayflower*. It was also named for luck.

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## The English

### Passengers

This term is used to describe all of the people who travelled on the *Mayflower*. This included families, individuals, servants and crew. Some motivations for travel may have been religious, some may have been financial. There were 102 people on board, with potentially 102 motivations for their voyage.

### Separatists

A group of radical Protestants who believed the established church – the Church of England – could no longer be reformed from within. They had to separate from the church and therefore from England in order to worship how they wished.

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### Puritans

Following the Reformation in the 1500s, this term was used to refer to a group of English Protestants who wanted to continue to reform or 'purify' the Church of England from within.

### Pilgrim

A traveller on a journey to a holy place. William Bradford – who wrote 'Of Plimoth Plantation' – used this term to describe the *Mayflower* passengers in his later account of the journey. As a result, this term has been widely used to describe all the passengers on the *Mayflower*. However, it's clear from elsewhere in Bradford's text that a religious motivation was only part of the reason for the voyage.

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'First, they saw by experience that the hardships of the country were such that comparatively few others would join them, and fewer still would bide it out and remain with them.'

'It was thought that if there could be found a better and easier place of living, it would attract many...'

'Old age began to steal on many of them, and their great and continual labours, with other crosses and sorrows, hastened it before their time.'

'Many of their children...were led by evil example into dangerous courses...so they saw their posterity would be in danger to degenerate and become corrupt.'

William Bradford

# The words we choose to use...

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## **The Native American people**

Indigenous	Something that originates or occurs naturally in a particular place. This can be used to describe the 'indigenous people of North America'.
Native American	The collective name often used for many different people living in America before European colonialists arrived.
Tribes, bands & clans	A group of Native Americans.
Narrangansett	Pronounced Na-run-gan-sit, a Native American tribe who lived in the area south of Massachusetts (pronounced Mass-a-chew-sets). The passengers of the <i>Mayflower</i> encountered this tribe when they arrived in this area.
Nauset	Pronounced Now-set, a Native American tribe who lived in the area south of Massachusetts. The passengers of the <i>Mayflower</i> encountered this tribe when they arrived in this area.
Wampanoag	<p>Pronounced Wom-pan-og, a Native American tribe who live in what we now know as Massachusetts, and whose ancestors met and helped the passengers of the <i>Mayflower</i> when they arrived in this area in 1620.</p> <p>Wampanoag means 'People of the First Light'. We know from archaeological evidence that they have lived in this area for 12,000 years.</p>
Sachem	Pronounced Say-chem, the name used by many Native American tribes to identify a leader.
Wetu	Pronounced Wee-too, the name for a Wampanoag house or home.

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### The place

#### America

What is now North and South America were simply named 'America' by Europeans in 1507, after Amerigo Vespucci. Vespucci was an Italian explorer, who travelled to the area and showed that it was separate from Asia.

#### Turtle Island

There was no single term used by the many different groups of Native Americans to describe where they lived. 'Turtle Island' is a term used to describe the continent of North America by many Native Americans living in the northeast. This name is based on various oral histories that tell stories of a turtle that holds the world on its back.

#### Pre-contact

Today, historians use the term 'Pre-contact America' to describe this place before Europeans arrived and started to settle.

#### Contact

The period of time from the early 1600s when Native Americans on the east coast began to encounter Europeans, resulting in the intended and unintended transfer of people and things.

#### Encounter

A term used to describe the meeting of Europeans and Native Americans, a point at which there's a conscious exchange between people.

#### Plymouth

The name of the place where the *Mayflower* passengers settled in America was known by a variety of different names, including Patuxet, Port St Louis, Whitesand Bay and Cranes Bay. 'Plymouth' was named on a map by John Smith in 1614. Today it's known as Plymouth, Massachusetts.

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### After landing

#### Settlers, Planters & Colonists

Historians refer collectively to the passengers on the *Mayflower* – when they arrive in America – using a range of terms such as these. Each individual could have be several of these things, and more besides including mothers, fathers, children and friends. The way we describe the people of the past can say as much about how we want to remember history, as it does about what actually happened.

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