Peril and Courage: The *Mayflower* Experience  
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Grade level: 8th

Directions: Look at each document and answer related questions. When you have finished, you will write an essay based on knowledge gained from the documents and your prior knowledge.

**Essay Question:** Based on your knowledge of the *Mayflower* Experience, identify some of the hardships and difficult decisions faced by the Pilgrims. For those who survived, where did they find their strength? Do you think you could have endured the ordeal – why or why not?

**Document 1**  
Man Overboard  
Excerpt from Nathaniel Philbrick’s *Mayflower.*

In the fall of 1620, the *Mayflower*’s ability to steady herself in a gale (strong wind) produced a most deceptive tranquility for a young indentured servant named John Howland. As the *Mayflower* lay ahull, Howland apparently grew restless down below. He saw no reason why he could not venture out of the fetid (foul smelling) depth of the ‘tween decks for just a moment. After more than a month as a passenger ship, the *Mayflower* was no longer a sweet ship, and Howland wanted some air. So he climbed a ladder to one of the hatches and stepped onto the deck.

Howland was from the inland town of Fenstanton, Huntingdonshire, and he quickly discovered that the deck of a tempest-tossed ship was no place for a landsman. Even if the ship had found her own still point, the gale continued to rage with astounding violence around her. The shriek of the wind through the rope rigging was terrifying, as was the sight of the towering, spume-flecked waves. The *Mayflower* lurches suddenly to leeward. Howland staggered to the ship’s rail and tumbled into the sea.

That should have been the end of him. But dangling over the side and trailing behind the ship was the topsail halyard, the rope used to raise and lower the upper sail. Howland was in his midtwenties and strong, and when his hand found the halyard, he gripped the rope with such feral desperation that even though he was pulled down more than ten feet below the ocean’s surface, he never let go. Several sailors took up the halyard and hauled Howland back in, finally snagging him with a boat hook and dragging him up onto the deck.

When Bradford wrote about this incident more than a decade later, John Howland was not only alive and well, but he and his wife, Elizabeth, were on their way to raising ten children, who would, in turn, produce an astounding eighty-eight grandchildren. A Puritan believed that everything happened for a reason. Whether it was the salvation of John Howland or the sudden death of the young sailor, it occurred because God had made it so. If something good happened to the Saints, it was inevitably interpreted as a sign of divine sanction. But if something bad happened, it didn’t necessarily mean that God disapproved; it might mean that he was testing them for a higher purpose. And as they all knew, the true test was yet to come.

1. What happened to John Howland? How was he saved?  
2. What is a halyard?  
3. How did the Pilgrims explain life’s ups and downs?  
4. What do you think “the true test was yet to come” refers to?
Alden, John (21, cooper)
Allerton, Isaac (34, tailor, merchant)
  *Mary (Norris) Allerton, wife
  Bartholomew Allerton, son
  Remember Allerton, daughter
  Mary Allerton, daughter
*Allerton, John (29, seaman)
Billington, John (38)
  Eleanor Billington, wife
  John Billington, son
  Francis Billington, son
Bradford, William (30, fustian maker)
  *Dorothy (May) Bradford, wife
Brewster, William (54, printer)
  Mary Brewster, wife
  Love Brewster, son
  Wrestling Brewster, son
*Britteridge, Richard (39)
Brown, Peter (20)
*Button, William
*Carter, Robert (servant to William Mullins), shoemaker
*Carver, John (35)
  *Katherine (Leggett) (White) Carver, wife
*Chilton, James (64, tailor)
  *Mrs. Chilton, wife
  *Mary Chilton, daughter
*Clarke, Richard
Cooke, Francis (37, wool comber)
  John Cooke, son
Cooper, Humility
*Crackstone, John (45)
  John Crackstone, son
Doty, Edward (18-25, servant to Stephen Hopkins)
Eaton, Francis (25, house carpenter)
  *Sarah Eaton, wife
  Samuel Eaton, son
*English, Thomas (master of the Speedwell and then the shallop)
*Fletcher, Moses (55, smith)
*Fuller, Edward (45)
  *Mrs. Edward Fuller, wife
  Samuel Fuller, son
Fuller, Samuel (40, brother of Edward Fuller; say-weaver, surgeon)
Gardiner, Richard (38, seaman)
*Goodman, John
*Holbeck, William (servant to William White)
Hooke, John (13, apprenticed to Isaac Allerton)
Hopkins, Stephen (38-42, tanner & merchant)
  Elizabeth (Fisher) Hopkins, wife
  Giles Hopkins, son by first marriage
  Constance Hopkins, daughter by first marriage
  Damaris Hopkins, daughter
  Oceanus Hopkins, born aboard Mayflower
Howland, John (21, servant to John Carver)
*Langmore, John (21, servant to Christopher Martin)
Latham, William
Leister, Edward (18-25, servant to Stephen Hopkins)
*Margesson, Edmund (34)
*Martin, Christopher (38, merchant)
  *Mary (Prower) Martin, wife
Minter, Desire
More, Ellen (8, indentured to Edward Winslow)
  *Jasper More, brother (7, indentured to John Carver)
    Richard More, brother (6, indentured to William Brewster)
  *Mary More, sister (4, indentured to William Brewster)
*Mullins, William (52/48, boot & shoe maker/dealer)
  *Alice Mullins, wife
    Priscilla Mullins, daughter
  *Joseph Mullins, son
*Priest, Degory (41, hatter)
*Prower, Solomon
*Rigsdale, John
  *Alice Rigsdale, wife
*Rogers, Thomas (48)
  Joseph Rogers, son
Sampson, Henry
Soule, George (18-25, teacher of Edward Winslow’s children)
Standish, Myles (27-36, military captain)
  *Rose Standish, wife
*Story, Elias (18-25, servant to Edward Winslow)
*Thompson, Edward (servant to William White)
*Tilley, Edward (32)
  *Ann (Cooper) Tilley, wife
*Tilley, John (49, brother of Edward Tilley)
  *Joan (Hurst) (Rogers) Tilley, wife
    Elizabeth Tilley, daughter
*Tinker, Thomas (wood-sawyer)
  *Mrs. Tinker, wife
  *boy Tinker, son
Trevor, William (seaman, hired to stay a year)
*Turner, John (30, merchant)
  *boy Turner, son
  *boy Turner, son
Warren, Richard (42, merchant)
*White, William (30)
  Susanna White, wife
  Resolved White, son
*Wilder, Roger (25, servant to John Carver)
*Williams, Thomas (38)
Winslow, Edward (25, printer)
  *Elizabeth (Barker) Winslow, wife
Winslow, Gilbert (20, brother of Edward Winslow)
Mr. Ely
Dorothy, maidservant of John Carver

5. What approximate percent of the passengers died within the first year?
6. Which occupations do you think would be most useful in establishing a new colony? Why?
Most of the Pilgrims felt that the bodies of girls were too weak to make the voyage on the *Mayflower*, and felt that girls were not strong enough to survive the hardships of building a colony. Because of this, most parents decided to leave the girls behind in England or Holland, and would send for them later once everything was built and more comfortable. Elder William Brewster brought his sons Love and Wrestling, but left behind his daughters Patience and Fear. Thomas Rogers brought his son Joseph, but left behind his daughters Elizabeth and Margaret. Francis Cooke brought his son John, but left behind his daughters Jane and Hester. Richard Warren had five daughters, Mary, Ann, Sarah, Elizabeth and Abigail, ranging in ages from 2-10 years old, but he left them all behind. And Degory Priest also left behind his daughters Mary and Sarah.

Despite the general belief that girls were weaker, 11 girls, ranging in ages from 1 through 17, did make the voyage on the *Mayflower* with their families. And perhaps more surprisingly, young girls proved to have the strongest bodies of all: the first winter, 75% of the women died, 50% of the men died, 36% of the boys died, but only two girls (18%) died.

7. What was the original thinking about girls coming to the colony? What did some parents do as a result?
8. In fact, what did population data show?
9. What time of year did these expeditions take place?
10. What would expect to be the weather conditions?
11. What might be the purpose for the various journeys?
Being thus arrived in a good harbor and brought safe to land, they fell upon their knees and blessed the God of heaven, who had brought them over the vast and furious ocean, and delivered them from all the perils and miseries thereof, again to set their feet on the firm and stable earth, their proper element...

But here I cannot but stay and make a pause, and stand half amazed at this poor people's present condition; and so I think will the reader too, when he well considers the same. 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 weather-beaten bodies, no houses or much less towns to repair to, to seek for succor (help). It is recorded in scripture as a mercy to the apostle and his shipwrecked company, that the barbarians showed no small kindness in refreshing them, but these savage barbarians, when they met with them (as after will appear) were readier to fill their sides full of arrows than otherwise. And for the season it was winter, and they that know the winters of that country know them to be sharp and violent and subject to cruel and fierce storms, dangerous to travel to known places, much more to search an unknown coast. Besides, what could they see but a hideous and desolate wilderness, full of wild beasts and wild men?

12. What inferred emotions are the Pilgrims feeling as they approach the shore?

13. What are some of the hardships they will be facing?