

# New england and virginia during the 17th century essay

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The Early English Settlements New England and Virginia during the 17th Century Nathaniel Philbrick's *Mayflower* and James Horn's *A Land As God Made It* are two of the most celebrated books that account the history of the first settlements in the United States. However, although these books do not really directly contradict each other, they have several striking differences that every reader should be aware of. In *Mayflower*, Nathaniel Philbrick relates how the Pilgrims arrived and settled in New England. The book ascertains that wherever the Pilgrims first set foot, it definitely was not Plymouth Rock, contradictory to the popular belief. Another popular belief that is contradicted was the celebration of the first Thanksgiving. The Indians and Pilgrims did not sit in tidy tables showing Victorian Art; instead, they stood, squatted and even sat on the ground while clustered in an outdoor fire sharing deer and birds in pottages.

As Philbrick has told in his book *Mayflower*, the Pilgrims were looking for a new place where they could gain religious freedom. Onboard a commercial vessel named *Mayflower*, these pious folks, without the slightest knowledge in the sea, ventured out from Netherlands in a transatlantic voyage, and eventually settled in what is to be known New England. At that time, the Pokanokets tribe who are the native settlers of the area was still recovering from a plague which weakened their number. In an effort to avoid any hostility between the newcomers, these Indians allied with the Pilgrims. For almost half a century, the Indians and Pilgrims tried hard to preserve peace in their lands. However, both the natives and the Pilgrims alike acted aggressively to expand their territories. The hostilities resulted in what could probably be called the deadliest little war, called King Philip's War, in

American History which lasted for more than two years and a loss of around 70% of early American population.

This war is said to be the primary reason why the natives are already extinct these days. Nathaniel Philbrick mentioned that King Philip's war was costly and totally unnecessary. It was brought about by misunderstanding and greed of the two colonies. In the book *A Land as God Made It*, James Horn showed a different take in the history of America. It focuses on the settlement in Jamestown, or what is now known as Virginia.

The account on the Pilgrims' arrival in New England was the more popular version of the first English settlement in North America. But the truth is, the settlement in Virginia was founded around thirteen years before the Mayflower vessel landed. However, this first Virginia settlement is not as highly regarded when compared to the Mayflower colony.

James Horn showed why the Virginia settlement plays a significant part in American History. He writes that it was this settlement that first introduced slavery to North America, the Jamestown/Virginia settlement was also the first to adopt a representative government, and of course, Virginia is said to be the site where the first clashes of the Indians and the whites over territorial expansion took place. It was Captain John Smith who lead the English troupe to Virginia.

He has somehow developed a good relationship with the Powhatans, the natives of that region. The story as James Horn relates it is very different from Disney's version of American history in their animated film *Pocahontas*.

The true story is definitely more complex and intriguing than that. In their books, James Horn and Nathaniel Philbrick showed some similarities in the two settlements. They related how the English and Indians tried to live peacefully together. However, it can't be denied that somehow, the natives felt threatened just by the mere presence of these English people. Much more note worthy are the significant differences between both settlements. The main differences lie in the purpose of the English colonies.

As what has already been said, the Pilgrims are pious people who just wish to escape their own lands so they could freely practice their religions. They were Puritans. When they arrived in New England, they did not impose their religions among the natives. They initially didn't have the plan to ward off the Indians from the land. However, a great war sprouted due to the need to expand their territories, and without the desire to co-exist and try to understand one another.

The war could be thought of as more of a political rivalry as much as it was cultural or racial. Captain John Smith's troupe on the other hand, ventured out into the American lands to rival the Spanish empire in all aspects, including the commercial industry and religion. Basically, John Smith was sent out to find pots of gold and convert the native Indians to Protestants. In the end however, John Smith failed, commercially speaking.

However, the Virginia settlement was able to make a profit out of growing weeds and tobacco. It could be said that John Smith was right in saying that worldwide trade for tobacco would help Virginia's economy. Despite the

differences in the two settlements, both are equally important in understanding the history of North America and the United States. Both books are products of thorough researches that were made by great authors in the hopes of opening up the minds and hearts of modern Americans to what really have happened in the first English settlements in the country. Both books aim to widen the gap between the myths and the truths.